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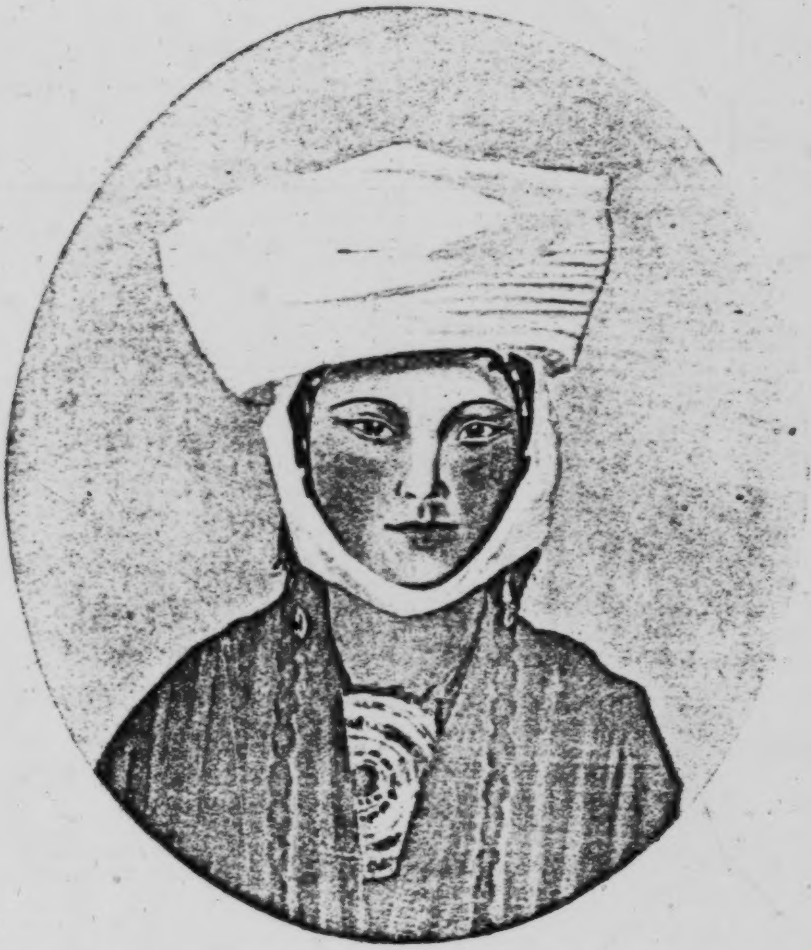

A KIRGHIZ BRIDE, CHINESE PAMIRS

Frontispiece

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CHINESE CENTRAL ASIA

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BY

C. P. SKRINE

INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE, BRITISH CONSUL-GENERAL IN
CHINESE TURKISTAN 1922–1924

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND
K.C.S.I.

WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN COLOUR
5 PANORAMAS AND 2 MAPS
51 OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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To

MY WIFE

WHOSE HELP AND COMPANIONSHIP

MADE ME ENJOY ALL

THESE WANDERINGS

[p.v] [p. iv is blank]

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PREFACE

500 THIS book is an account, compiled during a spell of home leave, of a very happy two and a half years spent by my wife and myself partly at Kashgar, partly on the road in Northern Kashmir and Chinese Turkistan. I did not seriously entertain the idea of writing a book about our experiences until three or four months before we left Kashgar; consequently, most of the letters and desultory notes on which I have relied for my material have had to be edited from memory far from the scenes described. The book does not in any sense, therefore, purport to be a treatise on the countries described. I have, however, thought it worth while to devote two or three chapters to such ethnological and other observations as my study of the Eastern Turki language and the experience gained in the course of my official duties suggested. It is hoped that the result of my amateur efforts will at any rate indicate the variety and interest of the different fields open to the student of man and Nature in Chinese Central Asia.

As a travel-book, on the other hand, I fear this work will be considered old-fashioned. Neither aeroplane, nor caterpillar-wheeled car, nor cinema, nor wireless, nor oxygen apparatus, nor any of the other adjuncts of up-to-date travel figure in its pages. The fact simply is that my wife and I, being confirmed nomads with a strong distaste for the beaten track, welcomed my appointment as Consul-General at Kashgar as a Heaven-sent opportunity for the gratification of our tastes; and for the benefit of the many who share those tastes I have tried to give a matter-of-fact account of the experiences and impressions of two average Britons wandering among the highlands and lowlands of "Innermost Asia." Though it has sometimes been difficult to maintain a due sense of proportion among scenes beautiful and rare, I have tried throughout to eschew exaggeration; and in particular I have done my best to avoid the trap into which so many travel-writers fall—over-

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emphasis of such difficulties and dangers as they may have experienced. The reader will find few of the " adventures " (most of which could probably, if the truth were known, have been avoided with a little more care and foresight) that loom so large in many popular accounts of travel.

My thanks are due to the Royal Geographical Society for permission to reproduce, with certain additions, the excellent map prepared by them to illustrate Sir Aurel Stein's paper on " Innermost Asia : its Geography as a factor in History," published in the " Geographical Journal " for May and June 1925. I have also to thank the Society for their great encouragement and help in connection with the photographs which illustrate this book.

In the collection of material for chapters XII and XIII, I was loyally assisted by my friend Murad Qari of Yarkand, who also helped me with the transcription and translation of most of the Turki songs, proverbs and popular sayings quoted. I would also like to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to my father, Mr. Francis H. Skrine, for many useful hints and for an invaluable final correction of the proofs.

With the exception of the plate representing certain Takla Makan antiques, for which I am indebted to the British Museum, the photographs were all taken and developed by me in camp or at Kashgar. For the benefit of those interested in the subject I have appended a note on photography in Central Asia at the end of the book. The frontispiece is a reproduction of a sketch made by my wife at Yambulak on our journey to Kashgar in 1922.

C. P. SKRINE

THE BATH CLUB
1st *July*, 1926

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INTRODUCTION

THE "unchanging East" is, of course, a fiction. The East does change, and change very remarkably, as we can see from this book. When a high Chinese official receiving a British Consul-General can wear a bowler hat, and relieving himself of it transfer it to an attendant wearing a Homburg hat, who thereupon places the bowler on the top of the Homburg on the top of his head, things must have changed indeed from the time when every Chinese official on every official occasion wore a pork-pie hat and feather and kept it firmly on his own head.

Other changes too one notes in this book. Thirty-nine years ago, when I first visited Chinese Turkistan, the Russian Consul-General was in a dominant position and there was not a single Englishman resident in the country. During the period with which this book deals (1922–4) the Russian Consulate no longer exists, and it is the British Consul-General who is the most influential European in Kashgaria.

Still, if the East does change, there can hardly be a part of it which changes less than Chinese Turkistan. On three sides it is hemmed in by lofty mountains, including the Himalaya, the Roof of the World, and the Heavenly Mountains. And on the fourth it is bounded by a great desert. Tibet itself is hardly less secluded. And, therefore, we can still see there now most of what the East was. The Chinese may have taken to wearing European clothes, but the skin under the clothes remains of much the same colour. From Mr. Skrine's account of the officials, including the General, they appear to be both as polite and cultured and composed, and also as arrogant and at times cruel towards the people, as they always have been in Turkistan. And the change in the amount of influence respectively exerted by the Russians and British does not particularly affect the Turki inhabitants. They seem to remain pretty much the same as they have been for centuries; and Chinese Turkistan

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is a blessed country without a single railway or even a metalled road.

Here then is a country worth taking some trouble to describe. You do not need a snap-shot camera : the object is sufficiently stationary for you to give it a time exposure. And Mr. Skrine has taken advantage of his opportunity. Not everyone—especially not every married man—would care to exile himself for two and a half years to so distant a post. But Mr. Skrine seized the chance with enthusiasm and worked assiduously all the time—observing like a bird all that went on around him and recording what he saw with the indefatigability of a typing machine.

And he was incessantly on the move touring the country. What with the Russian, French, Swedish and British travellers who have explored the western end of Chinese Central Asia one would have supposed that there was not a nook or corner which had not been visited. Yet Mr. Skrine discovered what must be about the most delightful spot in the whole country—the Happy Valley lying under the very eaves of the Roof of the World.

His description of this valley and of other parts which he visited, and of the people, their art, their folk-lore and their customs, and his photographs—all these together make Mr. Skrine's book a valuable and welcome addition to Central Asian literature.

FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

CHINESE CENTRAL ASIA

CHAPTER I

TO THE OUTPOSTS

IT was on a frosty evening in the November of 1921, in the cosy precincts of the Quetta Club bar, that Fate vouchsafed its first hint of the pleasant Odyssey that was in store for my wife and myself. A certain senior colleague of mine in the Foreign and Political Department, who happened to be in Quetta on duty at the time, drew me aside and made the following electrifying proposition :

" Some time ago I agreed to go to Kashgar next summer and officiate for a year as Consul-General in place of E. who is going on leave. Now, for domestic reasons, I don't want to go. Would you like me to suggest you to Government as a substitute ? "

It took me an appreciable time to grasp the full significance of this proposal. Then I said :

" Why, I'd start to-morrow if I had the chance. But I am far too junior and there's not the least prospect of their giving me the job."

" Oh, I don't know," said the Colonel, " it's only for a year,[1] and there won't be much competition. Anyhow, I may suggest your name to them at Delhi ? "

" Most certainly you may ! "

D. (my wife) and I were touring six weeks later in that remote and little-known district of East Persia, the Sarhad, when the telegram came which informed me that I had been appointed to officiate as British Consul-General in Chinese Turkistan. A picturesque Baluch scallywag of the Sarhad Levies brought it, twisted up in a grimy section of his voluminous clothing, from Khwash, 60 miles away, the westernmost station of all the far-flung Indian telegraph system. To use a

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[1] This period was subsequently extended.

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800 trite phrase, the news seemed too good to be true. Four years before, at Kerman in south-east Persia, Sir Percy Sykes (then Inspector-General of the South Persia Rifles) had spoken to me in glowing terms of the "Kashgar job," and I had sworn a vow that some day, later in my service perhaps when I should be full of years if not of honour, it should be mine. And now, after only four years, I was to go! The only question was, would D. be able to come with me? Forthwith I set the wires humming, and three anxious weeks, during which D. hardly slept for fear lest she should be left behind, passed before the necessary permission was received from Government. I had little anxiety on the score of her ability to stand the fatigues and hardships (if any) of the journey, for in the course of two long tours in the Sarhad she had had a good taste of desert travelling, and wanted more. Besides, I knew by experience how straight are made the paths of the British traveller on the frontier or beyond; had I not myself helped to make straight the paths of others in a like case?

There was no need for haste. The Kashmir passes would not be officially "open" for another four or five months. For it must be understood that the route by which Kashgar had been most easily accessible before the Russian Revolution, that is to say by rail from Russia to Andijan on the Transcaspian Railway and thence twelve marches by pony caravan across the Tien Shan, was no longer open. Thanks to the chaotic state of Transcaspia since the Revolution and the consequent closing of the Russian frontier of Chinese Turkistan, a comparatively easy journey to our destination with a free trip Home thrown in was denied us. The only practicable alternative was to go by rail and road to Srinagar and thence, in June when the passes opened, to ride and walk for seven weeks across the wide mountain belt which separates the Vale of Kashmir from the plains of Chinese Turkistan. There was plenty of time, therefore, to make our preparations and indulge in the delights of anticipation.

The end of April saw us jogging up the Jhelum valley to the Kashmir capital. Most travellers to Kashmir, being in a hurry, dash up the 190-mile road in two days by car. We could afford to take six days and taste the full savour of our first trip to the famous Valley, so we went by "tonga" or pony-cart. D. and I with our rolls of bedding and hand-luggage (our heavy boxes had gone ahead by motor-lorry) occupied one tonga, while on the other came, perched on mountains of

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their own baggage and some of ours, our faithful little butler-valet Ahmad Bakhsh and D.'s even smaller " ayah," a delightful old Bombay duenna called Malamma. The ayah came no further than Srinagar, for the passes would certainly have killed her, but Ahmad Bakhsh figures throughout this narrative and deserves a proper introduction. A dapper, cheerful, energetic, efficient little native of Amroha in the United Provinces, where the best servants come from, " A.B.," as we always called him, entered our service at Delhi in December 1920 when we were on our way to set up house in Baluchistan. Since then he had accompanied us loyally and cheerfully in all our wanderings and now, marvellous to relate, had volunteered to come with us to Kashgar. What this means will be appreciated by anyone who has tried, as I had more than once, to induce his best servants to accompany him on service out of India. Let me say here and now that A.B. not only went with us to Kashgar but stayed there for two years and came back with us, and that he was an unqualified success both as " camp khidmatgar " on the road and as head butler at the Consulate-General, where he ruled his Turki subordinates with a rod of iron.

Arrived in Srinagar, we found that it would be a month or more before we could expect to start on our long trek across the mountains. Thanks to the beauty of Nature in the Kashmir Valley in spring and to the kindness and hospitality of friends new and old, the time passed only too quickly. At first we were the guests of the First Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir, Mr. Lothian, and his charming wife; afterwards we collected a local cook and one or two other servants and set up house for ourselves in some unoccupied clerks' quarters lent us by the Resident. Then began in earnest the task of equipping ourselves and making arrangements for our long journey.

Before going further I must explain the situation as regards the " roads " which connect India with Chinese Turkistan. At their best, i.e. most of the way up to the furthest British outposts, they are well-engineered pack-transport roads, from three to six feet wide, made and maintained by the Indian Public Works Department. Once the level floor of the Jhelum Valley is left there is no question of *wheeled* transport of any kind; it would cost millions to construct a motor-road even as far as Gilgit or Leh. Beyond the outposts the " road " degenerates rapidly into a stony caravan

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track winding up the gorges and along the precipitous mountain-faces of the Karakoram until the Great Divide is reached.

There are few alternatives even among these exiguous paths. The tremendous barrier formed by the Hindu Kush and the Karakoram can only be pierced at three points, that is to say by the Chitral, Leh and Gilgit routes respectively. For reasons into which I need not enter, the first of these is not practicable for the ordinary traveller. The second, which goes from Srinagar to Leh and thence across the Karakoram to Yarkand, is the route most generally used. It is, I believe, by far the highest and most difficult trade-route in the world, not even excepting those across the Andes. Ever since the famous Forsyth Mission of 1873-4, which bore a letter and presents from Queen Victoria herself to the "Amir" Yakub Beg Bedaulat of Kashgar, it has been our policy to foster the trade between India and Chinese Turkistan. Until 1891, however, the Leh caravans used frequently to be looted by the men of Hunza and Nagar, and it is only since that year, when those tough little mountain principalities were brought to heel by Colonel Durand's column,[1] that the Leh road has been safe and regularly used by traders. The Kashmir State takes great interest in this "road," and it is carefully organized. The pack-transport road from Srinagar over the Zoji La Pass to Leh, the capital of Ladakh or "Little Tibet," is kept in excellent repair. An official known as the "British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh" looks after the interests of traders at Leh and Srinagar; stores of State grain are kept at various points along the Yarkand road for sale to caravans at fixed rates, and trade encouraged in many other ways. None the less, in spite of the facilities described above, the obstacles which the Indo-Central Asian trade has to surmount are so great that it is nothing less than marvellous that the route can be profitably used at all. First, there is the notorious Zoji La Pass near Srinagar with its blizzards and avalanches. Then between Leh and Yarkand five passes over 16,000 feet high have to be crossed, of which three are difficult and even dangerous, though the highest of them all, the Karakoram (18,550 feet), is easy. On this section, for fourteen consecutive marches all food-supplies for man and beast have to be carried by the caravans. Innumerable mountain torrents and not a few large rivers swollen with melting snows have to be forded.

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[1] See the late Mr. E. F. Knight's "Where Three Empires Meet" for a graphic description of this campaign.

The carriers, most of whom are Turki landowners of the Karghalik and Goma districts, lose scores of ponies every season owing to the rarefaction of the air on the high passes, to shortage of food and to accidents by flood, blizzard, glacier and precipice. Nevertheless year after year the caravans toil to and fro, carrying to Yarkand the products of Manchester looms and Bradford woollen mills, British and German dye-stuffs, tea and brocades from India, spices and sugar from Java; while in return come felts and hemp-drug (the hashish of Arabia), silks and carpets from Khotan and a substantial balance in gold dust and silver to fill the gaily-painted coffers of fat *bunnias* in Amritsar and Hoshiarpur.

Most of the European explorers, sportsmen, missionaries and others who have visited Central Asia from India have travelled by this route, and we might have followed in their steps. But I was more fortunate than they, for I was travelling to Kashgar on duty, and a shorter and less arduous, yet even more interesting, route was open to me. This was the last of the three mentioned above, that *via* Gilgit, the Mintaka Pass and the Chinese Pamirs. For several reasons this route is not practicable for trade or other regular traffic. For one thing, the gorge of the Hunza River between Baltit and Misgar (six marches) is in many places quite impossible for loaded ponies, and all baggage has to be carried in fifty-pound loads from village to village on the backs of the few porters available. For another, up to 1891, as we have seen, the brawny lads of Hunza and Nagar added considerably to their incomes by raiding the caravans on the Leh route; and though we console them in various ways for the loss of this source of wealth, and though they have been as good as gold for the last thirty years, it would perhaps be trying them too highly to encourage the stream of trade to flow through their wild fastnesses. Lastly, there is the difficulty of supplies; each caravan or large party depletes reserves along the road, thus adding to the troubles of the local Indian Army Service Corps and Kashmir Durbar authorities who have their hands full enough already with supplying the Gilgit garrison and the posts along the road. For the favoured traveller, however, who comes armed with official permission, these obstacles are tackled by the local authorities with the utmost goodwill. The British officer of the I.A.S.C. in charge of the Gilgit road allows him to draw rations for his party and forage for his animals from the Supply depots established at most of the stages; the

(Indian) officials of the Kashmir Durbar at Bandipur, Astore and Gilgit help him as regards any other supplies he may need as well as in the all-important matter of pony- or coolie-transport from stage to stage ; while, last but not least, the Political Agent at Gilgit makes the necessary arrangements with the chiefs of Hunza and Nagar who, tactfully handled and not overworked, treat their occasional European visitors with the utmost friendliness and traditional Oriental hospitality.

The date of opening of the Gilgit road is governed by the state of the two passes which have to be crossed in its early stages, the Tragbal (11,950 feet) and the Burzil (13,650 feet). Though not nearly so high as the passes further up the road, these two make up for their lower stature by their heavier snowfall. Climatically they belong to the well-watered southern face of the Himalayas. The Burzil in particular, owing to its proximity to the immense massif of Nanga Parbat (26,620 feet), carries an astonishing amount of snow right into the summer. The I.A.S.C., who are chiefly concerned, find that as a rule the snow has not melted sufficiently for transport to cross easily until the beginning of June, and it is then that they declare the pass " open." As a fact, travellers can and do cross the pass as much as three or four weeks earlier, by travelling at night when the snow-crust is hard ; but they do so at their own risk, for he who ventures too early in the season into the wilds of Gurais and Astore runs the gauntlet not only of blizzards on the passes but of avalanches in the valleys. We heard about the middle of May that the outgoing Consul-General had started down the road from Kashgar much earlier than had been expected and, travelling light, hoped to reach Srinagar by the end of the month. We were therefore advised to wait for him at Srinagar instead of meeting him up the road as we had intended, so that we could discuss Kashgar matters with him comfortably for a day or two before starting ourselves.

About this time we were joined by an old New College friend of mine, Mr. Gerard Price, a planter of tea in far Ceylon who, immediately he heard of my appointment, began to long amid his spicy breezes for the icy mountains of Central Asia, and wrote to ask if he might join us. I had some little difficulty in obtaining permission for him to accompany us to Kashgar, but eventually succeeded, and he proved a welcome addition to our small party.

A few days before our departure yet another Kashgar pilgrim appeared on the scene in the shape of Mr. H. I. Harding of the China Consular Service, who had been employed for several years on the staff of our Legation at Peking. Attracted like ourselves by the prospect of a year in Central Asia, he had volunteered to give up the home-leave due to him and go instead to Kashgar for a year in the comparatively humble capacity of Vice-Consul in place of Mr. N. Fitzmaurice of the same Service, who had occupied the post for four years and was only awaiting my arrival to go on leave. Mr. Harding had not come alone from Peking; he too had a friend, a Chinese journalist from Peking, travelling with him. We could not all go up the road together, as this would have sorely overtaxed the resources of the Gilgit route in transport and supplies, so the new-comers gave us a few days' start and followed us, marking time occasionally in order to avoid overtaking our more slowly-moving caravan.

Our time in the little house at Srinagar was fully occupied in preparations for the journey. There were temporary servants to engage, kit and stores to purchase. Numbers of the peculiarly strong leather-covered wooden boxes for pony transport known as "yakdans" and of the baskets, also covered with leather, carried by coolies and known as "kiltas," had to be made to order by local craftsmen. Saddlery, camp furniture, felt-lined top-boots, "poshteens" or sheepskin coats, etc., etc., had similarly to be constructed carefully according to our specifications. Ahmad Bakhsh and Nizam ud Din had to be provided with regular trousseaux including poshteens, boots and suits of "puttoo" or cheap Kashmir tweed for the passes as well as thin khaki twill clothes for the hot weather at Kashgar. Kitchen stores and utensils had to be bought according to carefully-thought-out lists and packed in the yakdans and kiltas, and a stock of knives, watches, table cutlery, etc., had to be laid in for presentation to those who helped us on the road. Next, transport had to be secured; with the help of the Kashmir Durbar we arranged for twenty-five pack ponies to be ready for us at Bandipur on the Wular Lake, the jumping-off place of the Gilgit road, to say nothing of a *dunga* or native barge fitted up as a house-boat, with cook-boat attached and crews to match, to take us by river and lake to Bandipur. Finally, in the daily-increasing heat of Srinagar at the end of May, there was the packing—but over this I will draw a veil, merely remarking that those who have not packed with a view to a year and a quarter practically cut off from all shops, half of it to be spent actually travelling and the other half keeping house and entertaining on a large scale, simply do not know what packing is. One more item in the list of our preparations is worth mentioning, and that concerned the language question. Up to the frontier all that the traveller needs is Hindustani, more properly called Urdu, the *lingua franca* of the Indian Empire ; though a good literary and colloquial knowledge of Persian, especially if acquired in Persia itself, will add to his prestige. But in Chinese territory a knowledge of Urdu is confined to the Indian traders and a very few Chinese subjects connected with India or the Consulate-General. Persian, too, is spoken by few outside the Afghan colonies in the larger towns. The traveller who, like myself, has a rooted objection to being cut off from the people of a country by ignorance of their language, must learn Eastern Turki, a descendant of the old Uigur tongue and a first cousin of modern Turkish. No suitable native of Chinese Turkistan could be found in Srinagar to coach me, but an excellent Indian subordinate official known as the Aqsaqal[1] of the Yarkandis, whose duties necessitated a colloquial knowledge of Eastern Turki, came to our house almost every day for three weeks and gave me a conversational start in the language which stood me later in good stead. D. joined us occasionally and picked up a few words, to which she afterwards added greatly (as a result, partly, of having a Turki maid) until by the time she left Kashgar she knew as much " colloquial " as I did.

While on the subject of languages, it may be of interest to mention that no fewer than seven different languages, apart from dialects, are spoken on the Gilgit road between Srinagar and Kashgar. These are :

In British Indian territory generally : Urdu.
In Gurais and Astore : Kashmiri.
In Gilgit : Shinā.
In Hunza and Nagar : Burushaski.
In Little Guhyal, and again at Dafdar in the Chinese Pamirs : Persian (Wakhi dialect).
In Sariqol : Tajik.
In Chinese territory generally : Eastern Turki.

There could be no better illustration of the extraordinary

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[1] The word means literally "greybeard" and is used throughout Turki-speaking Central Asia for " headman."

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RAKAPOSHI FROM NORTH SIDE OF HUNZA VALLEY NEAR BALTIT

[Face p. 8]

600 welter of races inhabiting the tangle of mountains through which we were soon to thread our way.

At last, on June 3, 1922, Colonel E. having arrived and the necessary conversations with him concluded, all was ready for the start. The *dunga* was brought by its chattering crew and moored to the river-bank near our quarters. Throughout the morning and half the afternoon our belongings gradually transferred themselves into it; our cook, who refused to come with us further than Bandipur, ensconced himself with his paraphernalia in the cook-boat together with A.B. and the "Knight of the Broom," and by four o'clock in the afternoon we had bid good-bye to our Srinagar friends and were slipping quietly down the placid Jhelum.

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How pleasant it was next day to awake on a perfect morning of June and find ourselves gliding peacefully along the winding channel which connects the Dal and Wular Lakes! They faded away like a dream, those hot and dusty weeks of bustle and preparation, of packing and re-packing, of chaffering with tradesmen and bickering with would-be servants, guides, horse-copers, boat-owners and all the thousand and one different species of tout with which Kashmir's capital swarms. Lithe brown Kashmiri watermen poled us unhurriedly along in our Noah's Ark-shaped craft, reminiscent of house-boats and old days on the river, conducive of restfulness. Early rising was no hardship in such circumstances, and Gerard Price and I with dressing-gowns over our pyjamas were soon sipping our early-morning tea on the veranda of the *dunga*, while the first rays of the sun bathed the ice-cliffs of Haramukh hanging in the northern sky.

It is always difficult on such occasions to realize that one is at last on the Road; but when it is such a Road as that which now lay at our feet——! A few months before, D. and I who had never seen even Kashmir would have looked upon Gilgit as the furthest limit of our possible wanderings in this direction. But now the Gilgit road was but the first and best-beaten section of a track which was to lead us right through the wild mountain principalities of Hunza and Nagar, through the "Rough Bounds" of Guhyal, over the Great Divide of the Hindu Kush, across the lofty wastes of the Pamirs and down through little-known gorges to the cities and deserts of a land, the very name of which had long been one to conjure with—Chinese Turkistan.

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,

but to be not only young—reasonably so—but bound for Kashgar was very Heaven !

Much has been written about the road from Srinagar to Gilgit, which is traversed yearly by frontier officials, sportsmen, explorers, globe-trotters and others, and I will therefore confine myself to a few impressions and episodes of interest. How vivid are some of those impressions still ! The landing from our *dunga* at the leafy little " port " of Bandipur ; the strawberries on which we feasted there, tarrying through the noonday heat at the cottage of kind Srinagar friends ; the first tang of pine-scented mountain air which greeted our nostrils that evening as we toiled up to the " alp " of Tragbal ; a snow-white river in Gurais which gushed out among pines from " caverns measureless to man " ; a Paradise of cornfields shaded by groves of walnut and mulberry, Astore, hanging over its abysmal river-gorge like the gardens of a mountain Babylon ; the gashed and blasted flank of Hatu Pir with its break-neck descent to the heat and sand-flies of Ramghat ; the strange hues and stately reaches of the Indus Valley, first seen from the wooded heights of Dashkin. . . . It was comfortable travelling ; we slept nightly at well-built rest-houses which boasted two or three, sometimes even four sets of rooms, and our marches, except when a pass had to be crossed, were taken easily enough on foot or horseback according to our whim. Rapid marching was out of the question in any case ; for we depended, after crossing the Burzil Pass, on local ponies and men for the transport of our baggage ; and ponies and men alike, poor creatures, were sadly weak and emaciated owing to two consecutive years of famine. This, we were at first puzzled to hear, had been caused by over-copious monsoons ; in a land most of which stands upon its own edge, as it were, famine is more often caused by exceptionally heavy rains which wash whole fields away, crops and all, than by drought. We did what we could for those who came to us, but it was little enough, for it was food they wanted, not medicines or money. A procession of hill-men would come to our halting-place, carrying on a primitive bedstead a poor wretch in the last stage of some terrible malady, obviously brought on, or at any rate aggravated, by a diet of wild plants and garbage ; it was heartrending to have to send the pitiful train away up the steep hill-side with but a tin or two of condensed milk and a handful of flour, all we could spare, well knowing that the man was doomed. We were cheered to hear afterwards at Gilgit that Government supplies were on their way, now that the Burzil Pass was at last open, and that the coming crop promised to be a good one.

The crossing of one's first really high pass is a great event, and our defeat of the snowy Burzil was a memorable experience for all of us. True, it was not quite our first pass, even in Kashmir, for the Tragbal was already behind us. But the Tragbal hardly counts, for it only boasts a beggarly 11,000 feet, and moreover does not fulfil one's ideas of a pass at all ; rather is it a long, bare, grassy upland across which the path winds for several miles and then suddenly dives giddily into a forest-filled glen. The Burzil, on the other hand, is every inch a pass, 13,500 feet high. For two whole marches one steadily ascends ; up through the leafy Gurais valley, famed for its trout, up the pine-clad slopes of Pushwari, up and ever upwards past the lovely alp of Minimarg, haunt of bears, past woods of silvery birch and over boggy meadows pink with primulas, each new landscape more beautiful than the last. Then the ascent suddenly steepens, flowers and trees drop away below and the traveller is left alone with the black rocks and the snow and the razor-edged breath of the great ranges. . . . Of real difficulty or danger from the mountaineering point of view there is now little or none, though in the early days of British penetration the crossing of the pass before the melting of the snows must have been a much more arduous business ; for then there was no Burzil *chauki*, or rest-house. Right below the lofty saddle of snow which marks the pass appears a roomy, stoutly-built châlet of stone, and here, in the cosy quarters provided by a benign Government, we made ourselves thoroughly at home before roaring fires of pine-logs. Within ten minutes of our arrival D. with her habitual industry (always warmly approved and encouraged by myself) had started in to bake large quantities of the tasty scone of her native heath, and in due course the three of us were sitting down to a tea *à l'Écossaise* which would have done justice to any fishing hotel in the Highlands.

Under the fierce sun of a Kashmir June, snow softens in the daytime at higher altitudes even than 13,000 feet, and it is advisable to cross a pass like the Burzil at night or in the

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early morning, when the surface is firmly caked. Accordingly at the "dead unhappy" hour of three next morning, or soon after it, we swathed ourselves in every woollen and furry garment we could muster and zigzagged sleepily up the bleak hill-side. Ours were the first ponies of the season to cross the pass and, no path being visible, our only guide was the Burzil stream; when this disappeared under a solid casing of ice and snow, the leading carriers had frequently to cast about for a practicable route. The snowfields were nowhere steep enough to be really dangerous, but there were one or two *mauvais pas* where a slip would have meant an involuntary toboggan-run into the depths of the glen, with the possibility of hitting a weak point in the torrent's ice-cap at the end of it.

Dawn was breaking when we emerged upon wide snow-slopes. Here there is a tower of steel girders about 40 feet high with a small hut perched comically on the top. This, we were informed, was a shelter for those hardy employees of the Indian Telegraph Department whose duties take them over the pass at all times of the year. At first I could hardly believe that so high a tower was necessary; but our carriers assured us that the snow sometimes covered the hut. I thought of beloved Munchausen of my childhood, with a new respect for his veracity. Accustomed to the snowfalls of my grandparents' Highland home, seldom more than a foot or two in depth, I had always had a little difficulty in swallowing one, if no other, of the worthy Baron's adventures. I refer, of course, to the occasion on which the Baron, having tethered his horse one evening to a lonely wooden cross which protruded from the snow, woke up next morning after a sudden thaw to find himself sitting in the middle of a village market-place and his steed dangling by its bridle, kicking and struggling, from the topmost cross of the church steeple. Had I known about the Burzil, my scepticism would have vanished.

The going was now easy, and we made good progress past the half-buried Burzil Hut at the summit and down the steep but smooth northern side, where I longed for skis. By noon we had reached Sardar Koti, some miles beyond the foot of the pass on the Astore side, and now we understood why it was so necessary to cross the Burzil by night at this time of year; the snow, which had been so firm, became, as we crossed the last patches, a bog in which ponies and men floundered helplessly. There is also the danger of avalanches, the force and fury of which may be gauged from what we saw at Gorai on

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

the north side of the Tragbal. "Baedeker," i.e. the official route-book, mentions a convenient rest-house at this place on a knoll which rises 20 or 30 feet above the torrent. All we could see was a sprinkling of stones and fragments of mortar on the hill-side, steep as the proverbial side of a house, *above* the knoll. We were puzzled by this, until it was explained to us that the year before an April avalanche had come down the opposite side of the glen with such momentum that its head had shot across the stream and had carried the rest-house a hundred feet up the hill-side! Luckily the place was empty at the time.

Near Chillum on the north side of the Burzil we were met by the three mounted servants whom Colonel E. had brought down from Kashgar and left in Astore to wait for us. To eyes unaccustomed to the costumes of Central Asia they were an odd-looking trio. They wore dark-coloured overcoats padded with cotton-wool and coloured scarves wound round their waists, shapeless top-boots and remarkable red and white cocked hats exactly like the triangular paper hats made by children.[1] Of the three new additions to our *dramatis personæ* two did not remain long in our service after we reached Kashgar and may be dismissed briefly. Muhammad Rahim, a well-meaning but inefficient Ladakhi strongly resembling a baboon, appeared to owe his post as orderly to an alleged capacity for camp cooking; accordingly we tried him as a relief for the overworked Ahmad Bakhsh, but the effect upon our digestions was such that D. very soon relieved him of his culinary duties. Mamatek, the assistant table-servant at the Consulate, was an overgrown lad of about sixteen who afforded us our first experience of the congenital laziness of the younger Turki. But Hafiz, the orderly in charge of the horses, was a man of a very different type. Sturdy, active and efficient, Hafiz was always in the forefront whenever there was a job of work to be done or a difficult bit of road to pilot the caravan over. He was particularly good with animals; his was the only horse that never gave any trouble, and at Kashgar he proved a great success as Keeper of the Camel, when as a matter of course he was entrusted with the special duty of looking after and leading D.'s stately and supercilious mount, Camel Sulaiman. A native of the Kashgar oasis and a Chinese subject, Hafiz both in appearance and in characteristics approximated rather to the Mongol than to the Iranian type of Kashgari Turki. His pluck, honesty, promptness, loyalty and unflagging spirits made him in course of time more of a friend to both of us than a servant. He accompanied us on every yard of our various journeyings and when, two and a half years later, we came at last to the end of them, there was no one in all Kashgaria with whom we were more grieved to part.

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[1] The Kashgar orderlies now wear khaki turbans in the Indian style, a form of headgear they much prefer to the local type.

In the gloomy depths of the Astore river-gorge, where the path clings perilously to the cliff-face and comes at times within inches of the foaming river, occurred the nearest approach to an "adventure" that any of us had on this journey. An adventure may be described as an unexpected occurrence which is dangerous at the time and, like one's schooldays, pleasant (if at all) chiefly in retrospect. I may be of an unromantic temperament, but that is how I have been struck by the few I have experienced. The adventure in question, which certainly merited the above description, came about as follows. With the servants we found waiting for us at Chillum was the horse which Colonel E. had ridden down from Kashgar, and which I was to ride up there, a black Afghan stallion of great strength and (as I found afterwards) by no means of a vicious temperament. On this occasion, however, all four animals had been eating their heads off for a fortnight in the clover of Astore; also—*cherchez la jument*—the black horse and a quarrelsome ginger-coloured mustang from Yarkand ridden by Hafiz were hated rivals whenever there were any mares in the offing. On the day that we marched down the gorge from Astore village our caravan included two or three mares, a fact which escaped my notice until we came up with one that was lagging behind the rest of the loads. Suddenly, snorting and flinging up a contemptuous heel at his rival as he passed, Hafiz' steed shot past us, bent no doubt on a flirtation with the mare; this was too much for the black, which pursued the red horse and sank his teeth in the latter's neck. Followed a battle royal, the red horse's hind legs lashing out time after time like a runaway threshing machine and the black snapping furiously at the red's neck and quarters, neither of them paying the slightest attention to his rider.

Most providentially, this Homeric conflict took place at one of the few points on the day's march where the four-foot path did not actually overhang the river, from which it was

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here separated by several yards of detritus fallen from the cliffs above; for the combatants behaved exactly as if they had the widest plains of their native Turkistan to fight over. Perhaps a better horseman than I would have stuck on at all costs and dragged his mount out of the mêlée by sheer strength and will-power; I frankly confess that I thought of nothing but how to jump, slide, tumble or otherwise remove myself from the back of my horse at the earliest opportunity and thus escape alike the Scylla of the red horse's hoofs and the Charybdis of the river. The worst moment was when the black horse lost his balance and sank to the ground with the other on top of him; even then, my leg being pinned, I could not roll clear, and the beast was up again with me on his back before I knew where I was. Finally he reared high in the air and I, seeing a few feet of smooth ground behind me, rolled off on to it, a few seconds after Hafiz had managed to do likewise. Bruised and shaken but thankful, I joined D., who had been an agitated spectator of the whole affair, and together we watched the horses continue the battle among the rocks. There was no stopping them, and peace was not declared until the black had bitten several gory holes in his enemy's neck and had torn his near-side saddle-flap right off, and the red horse on his part had kicked or savaged his rival in a dozen different places.

Thus was the hungry Astore River baulked of its prey, and Hafiz and I escaped with some heavy but not serious bruises on back and legs; we struggled into Dashkin and there stopped the night, halving our march, and no permanent damage was done except to a Government saddle. Needless to say we did not allow the enemies within a day's march of each other again, and at Gilgit I graciously loaned the red horse as a mount for the rest of the journey to our Vice-Consul, Harding, who as already explained was following two or three days behind us up the road. But the poor beast was doomed to a tragic end after all; in Guhyal, a few marches beyond Gilgit, he fell off the path eight hundred feet into the Hunza River—without on this occasion, however, doing his best to take another horse and a couple of unoffending human beings with him.

Another novel but less unpleasant experience was being slung across the Astore River at Ramghat on a bridge consisting of a single steel cable. A year earlier we could have crossed by a fine suspension bridge, ponies, loads and all;

ment of a delightful picnic; and even it was not without its bright spots. After that grilling midday tramp of 8 miles from Ramghat to Bunji, the cool gloom of the bungalow which another kind friend put at our disposal was no less than the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land, and the somewhat flavourless white mulberries of the country which we devoured in platefuls were luscious as the grapes of Paradise. In the late afternoon the heat haze vanished and there appeared, framed in the mighty curves of the Indus gorges, lovely as the Taj at the end of its cypress-vista, the ice-clad dome of Nanga Parbat, 26,600 feet high. None of us had ever imagined, much less seen, so wondrous a picture of mountain beauty and majesty, and we could but gaze in silence while the virgin world of ice above the clouds glowed brighter and brighter with the gathering of the shadows below.

At Gilgit, which we reached on June 15, we received a royal welcome from the Political Agent and his wife, and were soon revelling in the comforts of a well-appointed European house and the shade and fruits of its delightful garden. One of the pleasantest features of travelling in these parts is the uniform kindness and hospitality even of perfect strangers, who make the most elaborate arrangements for one and insist on one's treating their houses as hotels, even when they are not at home themselves. In the present case our hosts were old friends of mine, the Political Agent happening by a lucky chance to be Colonel D. L. Lorimer, my erstwhile chief at Kerman. During the four days we spent at this last European-inhabited outpost of the Indian Empire, preparing for the longest and wildest section of our journey, often did we talk of far-off Kerman and exchange reminiscences of life and travel in the sunny land of Persia.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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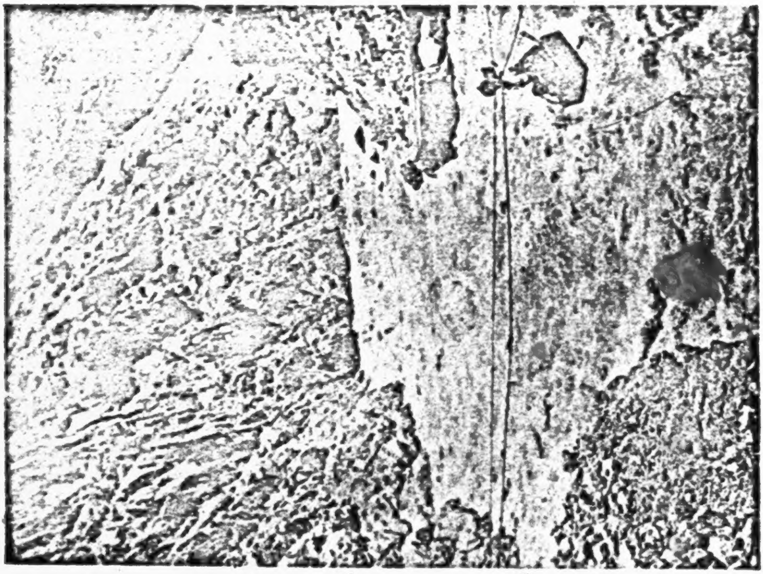
A *RAFIQ* OR CLIFF TRACK IN THE HUNZA GORGES



HOW WE CROSSED THE ASTORE RIVER AT RAMGHAT

[Face p. 17]

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CHAPTER II

IN THE HEART OF THE KARAKORAM

OUR three days' halt at Gilgit gave us a welcome opportunity to recondition our kit and replenish our stores, according to the experience we had gained and the advice we received from Gilgit friends well versed in the peculiar " ropes " of travel in these parts. We had also time to learn something about the wild regions through which we were to travel for the next fortnight. The Hunza-Nagar country is familiar to those interested in this part of Asia from the late Mr. E. F. Knight's " Where Three Empires Meet," Sir Aurel Stein's " Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan," and other standard works ; but it is of such peculiar interest that some remarks about it may not be out of place.

Stein says of the Hunza Valley, which he traversed in 1900 on his first journey to Chinese Turkistan :

> " There can be no doubt that this secluded valley, so long inaccessible to outside influence, with its small population wholly isolated in regard to language and ethnic origin, contains much that deserves careful examination by the ethnographist and historical student." [1]

The district is part of a region long known vaguely as Dardistan, inhabited by two widely-differing races.[2] The Yeshkun tribe, to which the Hunza-Nagaris belong, is probably of Yüehchih or " Indo-Scythian " original[3] and is supposed to have come up the Indus valley at a very early date, followed later by an Indian tribe of more humble lineage called the

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[1] " Archæological Explorations in Chinese Turkistan," p. 8.

[2] See Sir T. Holdich's article on " Gilgit " in the " Encyclopædia Britannica."

[3] The Yüehchih or " Indo-Scythians " were pushed out of Kansu and Eastern Turkistan by Hiong-nu (Huns) from the north, and overran Bactria (afterwards Balkh, now Afghan Turkistan) about 120 B.C. Later they crossed the Hindu Kush and founded a great state in what is now the North-West Frontier Province of India.

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Shins who pushed them by force of numbers into the wilder and more inaccessible fastnesses of the Karakoram.

Well-built, upstanding and fearless, many of them good-looking and comparatively fair-complexioned, the men of Hunza and to a less extent the Nagaris contrast strongly with their neighbours further down the Indus Valley, a dark, undersized, grubby race. The language of Hunza, Burushaski, is quite different not only from the Shinā tongue of Gilgit but from all other known languages; Stein calls it "an erratic block left here by some bygone wave of conquest."[1] The ruling families of the two little States are reputed to be descended from a common ancestor in the fifteenth century, but he, they claim, was descended from Alexander; if the Yeshkuns are really of Yüehchih origin, as Biddulph thinks, it is just possible that this mythical tradition represents a race-memory of Bactria which Alexander conquered in 329–7 B.C. However this may be, there is no doubt whatever that the race which inhabits the Hunza Valley has been there, tucked away in the heart of the greatest mountain mass in the world, for a very long time indeed.

In this connexion, it must surely be more than a mere coincidence that the favourite game in Hunza and Nagar, which has been played there since time immemorial, is a primitive form of polo. Now polo, as is well known, was the royal game of Persia in the Middle Ages, though it has long been forgotten in that country. More striking still, the practice of archery on horseback is still kept up, particularly in Nagar, which is the more conservative of the two states. One of the regular sports there is shooting a narrow at full gallop at a small silver mark fixed in the ground; we watched the Nagaris doing it when we stayed with the Mir on our journey down, and were astonished at the accuracy with which they planted their arrows as they thundered past. One's thoughts at once flew back across the ages to the ancient Parthians; could it be that here, in the Indian Empire of the twentieth century, the "Parthian shot" still survived, if only as a sport? The art of shooting on horseback, indeed, still exists in Persia, but the bow has long since been dropped for the rifle.

Another link with the remote past is the shadowy suzerainty still claimed by the Chinese over the people of Hunza, or "Kanjut" as they call it. This is probably a survival of a

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[1] "Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan," p. 34.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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[Face p.20]

connexion between the Gilgit district and the Celestial Empire dating back to a most interesting episode in the history of High Asia, one which has only been brought to light during the present century through the researches of the late M. Édouard Chavannes[1] and of Sir Aurel Stein. The account given in the official Annals of the T'ang Dynasty, our sole authority, may be summarized as follows. Towards the end of the seventh century A.D. the Chinese, then at the height of their power in Eastern Turkistan, occupied the districts comprised in the present Gilgit Agency with a view to driving a wedge between their two great enemies, the Arabs on the upper Oxus and the Tibetans in Ladakh. Between 722 and 741 the Tibetans, in their efforts to join hands with the Arabs and secure a base on the Pamirs for an attack upon Kashgar, managed to gain possession first of Baltistan (Polu) and afterwards of the Gilgit district (Little Polu). This stimulated the Chinese to a truly remarkable enterprise. An army ten thousand strong under a general of Korean extraction called Kao Hsien-chih marched up to the Pamirs from Kashgar, defeated the Tibetans, crossed the exceedingly difficult Darkot Pass (15,400 feet) into Yasin and reoccupied the whole of "Little Polu," including the Hunza Valley. It is almost incredible that so large an army, or indeed any army at all, should have performed such a feat; but the T'ang Annals are definite and circumstantial on the subject, and Sir Aurel Stein by his researches on the spot has worked out the itinerary actually followed by the Chinese general. The latter's exploit made a lasting impression on the neighbouring countries of Asia, though not perhaps quite such a widespread one as the Chinese historian would have us believe when he says that "the Syrians, the Arabs and 72 kingdoms of divers barbarian peoples were all seized with fear and made their submission." "Little Polu" was turned into a military district with a garrison of 1,000 men, which, it is interesting to note, was afterwards victualled with the utmost difficulty from Kashmir, probably by the very same route by which the present garrison of Kashmir State troops under British officers has been supplied for the past thirty-five years. By the end of the eighth century the Chinese power had gone down before the victorious Tibetans, and close upon a thousand years were to elapse but this convenient method of transit was no longer available. The previous July, during the annual "spring cleaning" and readjustment of the bridge and its cables, one of the latter parted and the bridge turned turtle, flinging six unfortunate workmen into the river and drowning three of them. It still spanned the perpendicular-sided gorge, but all twisted, tangled and awry, its roadway, railings and all, tilted giddily round towards the river a hundred feet below. There was something peculiarly grim and yet pathetic about the sight; the picture of the bridge twisting round and the wretched coolies dropping off it like flies haunted one, while the vast scale of the picture's setting dwarfed it until the broken bridge seemed no more than a strand of spider's web torn by the falling of a twig. Here where it debouches into the Indus, the Astore river-gorge is at its narrowest and deepest, and a mighty volume of water roars through it in summer from the glaciers and melting snows of Nanga Parbat. As D. and I squatted in the four-feet-square wooden box without a lid which did duty for a car and were jerked slowly across the gulf, we had ample time to gaze apprehensively downwards and ask each other how any of those six coolies managed to escape at all.

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[1] Chavannes, "Documents sur les Tou-kiu occidentaux"; Stein, "A Chinese Expedition across the Pamirs and Hindukush, A.D. 747." "Journal of the Royal Geographical Society," February, 1922.

The temporary rope bridge above described, though up to four hundredweight of people or baggage at a time, could not cope with horses, and our mounts had to make a detour involving two extra marches down the Indus to Lezin, across a bridge there and up the right bank. We were thus deprived of them for two days. To our dismay we found that the shortage of horseflesh was even more pronounced nearer Gilgit than in Astore, and two or three skinny local "tats" were all that we could raise for our servants and ourselves. We had perforce, therefore, to foot it most of the forty-four interminable miles of baking sand and rocks that compose the road between Ramghat and Gilgit. In June the Indus Valley at this point is not to be compared for heat and biting insects with some countries that I have experienced, the Persian Gulf littoral for instance, or the plains of Sind though which this same Indus flows a thousand miles further south. Still, there are cooler places, and I for one have decided that if ever I have to travel up this road again in summer, nothing will induce me to come down from the cool heights of Astore until I am assured of a mount for every yard of the Ramghat-Gilgit road. Of our whole journey from Srinagar to Kashgar, this was the only section which fell below the level of enjoy-

300 before it was re-established. But the tradition of Chinese dominion in " Little Polu " seems to have survived. For at least two generations before the British conquest the Mir of Hunza, or " Kanjut Chief " as the Chinese call him, had been sending annual deputations to the Tao Tai of Kashgar with tribute in shape of gold dust and woollen cloth ; and in 1847 we hear of Hunza sending a contingent to the aid of the Chinese in one of the numerous revolts of the period. And yet there is no record of a Chinese army having ever again penetrated south of the Hindu Kush. The Hunza deputation still waits on the Tao Tai of Kashgar every year with an ounce and a half of Shimshal gold dust and bales of rough grey tweed, and every year, as a proof that the Kanjut Chief is still his feudatory, a photograph goes to the Governor at Urumchi showing the Tao Tai sitting in full durbar with scales for weighing the gold dust by his side and the men of Hunza standing respectfully before him. The Tao Tai indeed makes it worth the said chief's while to pay the " tribute," for he sends back several times its value in presents of porcelain, silk and tea, besides defraying all the expenses of the deputation while in Chinese territory.

The scarcity of even reasonably level ground and the poorness of the soil are such that it is only by hard work and clever husbandry that the land can be made to support any population at all. The crofts and steeply-terraced plots of the inhabitants cling precariously to the precipitous sides of the river-valley and its narrow side-glens ; even in the main valley the cultivation is only in three or four places more than a few hundred yards wide. To the inhabitants of such a country the world consists of " nullahs " or confined valleys in which men live, and the ice-bound heights between them. This is amusingly illustrated by a conversation which took place between a British officer of my acquaintance who was shortly going home on leave, and a headman in the Yasin district.

" You are going to your father's home in England, aren't you, Sahib ? " asked the headman.

" Yes, I am going to the capital of England, London."

" London is a very big place, with plenty of shops, isn't it, Sahib ? "

" Yes, there are a great many shops."

" I suppose it is in a nice *wide* nullah, Sahib ? "

The country being what it is, one must not be too hard on

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the men of Hunza if they succumbed to the temptation put before them by British encouragement of trade on the Yarkand [illegible] road and regularly raided the caravans, coming and going by the terrible Shimshal gorges through which no hostile force on earth could follow them. Even the slave-traffic which they carried on, selling their weaker Shin neighbours in droves across the Chinese border, can be understood if not forgiven. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that they were quite as bad as they were painted. Nothing indeed surprised me more on the way through their country in 1922 and afterwards, than the difference between the courtesy, good humour, frankness, honesty and genuine friendliness of the men of Hunza and the picture drawn of them by the author of "Where Three Empires Meet." Arrogant, bloodthirsty, treacherous, cruel—no words of abuse are too strong for them. I think the explanation is to be found, partly at any rate, in the reaction of a small, despotically-governed Oriental people to the character of its ruler. Safdar Ali, the Mir who was deposed by the British after the campaign of 1891, was from all accounts a man who deserved all Mr. Knight's strictures and more. It was his greed, cruelty and arrogance that were responsible for the state of affairs which eventually necessitated the Hunza expedition; and one can well believe that the fiercer spirits at any rate among his entourage became like him. It was only necessary, as the British authorities wisely saw, to banish Safdar Ali, or rather to let him stay where he had taken refuge in Chinese territory, for a great revulsion of feeling to take place among his subjects under his admirable successor, Muhammad Nazim Khan, the present Mir. In spite of the loss alike of their independence and of the chief source of their wealth, so soon afterwards as 1895 the Hunza-Nagaris were rendering yeoman service in the Chitral campaign, and at the present day it would be difficult to find more loyal and enthusiastic adherents of the "Sarkar."

Fierce rivalry has existed from time immemorial between the two principalities which frown at each other across the Hunza River, unfordable in summer and forming an admirable strategic frontier. Though they might combine against a common foe, as they did in 1891, a state of chronic warfare had existed between them until Colonel Durand's column enforced the *pax Britannica* which has existed ever since. Not much love, however, is even now lost between the two states, particularly as the Hunza men are Maulais or followers of H.H.

the Agha Khan,[1] whereas the Nagaris are strict Sunnis. But their age-long rivalry is now, theoretically at any rate, a friendly one, confined to the polo-field and the various sporting contests organized at the *jhalsas* or "Highland Gatherings" held twice yearly at Gilgit. Only among the older men, perhaps, does a lingering regret for the good old days survive. D.'s Hunza orderly once took his mistress to see his tall, upstanding, white-moustachio'd father, who showed her with loving pride the sword and bow with which he used to fight the men of Nagar and raid the caravans on the Leh road.

"We were poorer in those days," the old man said. "We used to take the Nagaris prisoner and sell them as slaves to the Kirghiz for the Yarkand market. We used to loot silk and pearls and coral from the Leh caravans." He heaved a sigh, and then, remembering to whom he was speaking, added, "But now, *by the favour of the British Government*, we do not need to fight or raid any more."

The four marches between Gilgit and Baltit, the capital of Hunza, are graphically described by Knight in "Where Three Empires Meet," and a few extracts from letters written on the road and from an account of the journey which I compiled soon after arrival at Kashgar will suffice to convey some of our more vivid impressions. The first two marches up to Chalt, where the extracts begin, are dull compared with the second two; little can be seen from the bottom of the ever-narrowing Hunza river-gorge along which the road, from four to six feet wide and as solid as anyone could wish, is carried for the most part on ledges and galleries cut out of the cliff-face, alternating with stretches of flat but stony beach. Eighteen miles from Gilgit we spent the night at Nomal, a sunny strip of orchards and cornfields contrasting happily with the desolate gorge above and below it.

Chalt, 20th June, 1922.

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Just before you reach this village the gorge opens out into a fair valley round which the pine-forests

Fledge the wild-ridgèd mountains steep by steep,

sheltering terraced fields of maize and barley and tiny hamlets set in orchards of apricot and mulberry. The steep Chaprot glen stretches away up into the sunset, a sentinel village perched on a poplar-crowned crag in its midst; to the south, if you climb a little way up the grassy hill-side and are careful not to look round until you reach a little shepherd's hut, there will burst upon you the first marvellous vision of twenty-five-thousand-foot Rakaposhi. Like a sword of ice brandished to heaven, the sharp ridge of Rakaposhi stabs the blue, incredibly far overhead; surely nowhere else in the world can crag and snow-slope and ice-cliff be seen from such close quarters towering one above the other to a height of nearly four miles! In the evening we wandered up the Chaprot path, and from a flat-topped boulder watched the setting sun catch points on the ice-wall and make them glow like burnished silver above the shadowy forest, while opposite us the "alpengluh" suffused Rakaposhi and the sea of peaks from which it rises.

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[1] I had come across a community of this sect in the wild country south-east of Yezd, far away in Central Persia, and it was interesting to find more of them in another remote corner of Central Asia. We were to find yet other colonies of Maulais in Sariqol on the Pamirs and in the plains district of Posgam, south of Yarkand.

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Minapin, 21st June, 1922.

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At Ghalmit, the half-way house on this march, we were met by the son and heir of the Mir of Nagar, a good-looking, well-mannered youth of about twenty-five. He is a contemporary of the heir of Hunza, our escort Ghazan Khan, and the two are old school-fellows and the best of friends in spite of the historic enmity between their States. This friendship is cemented by the marriage of Ghazan Khan's sister to the Nagar boy. As for the heir of twenty generations of Hunza chiefs, he is a friendly, cheerful youth, fair and sandy with a bushy red moustache, a Scotsman to the life did he but dress the part.

We lunched under a spreading plane in the very middle of the village, sitting on deck-chairs specially brought for us from Nagar, a delicate attention invariably paid to "Sahibs" by the thoughtful Mir. Soon after leaving the village we were surprised to see ahead of us, issuing from the depths of the gorge, vast clouds of what seemed to be smoke flying upwards with great rapidity. Somewhat alarmed, and wondering whether perchance we had come by mistake to the verge of the Bottomless Pit, we pushed on, and soon discovered what it was; on the opposite slope of the valley, which is composed of crumbling rock and detritus and is pitched at a very steep angle, a stone-shoot was in progress—a kind of continuous land-slide in which streams of boulders bounded down a funnel-shaped slope, sending up columns of dust as they went. Every now and again the battering of the stones would dislodge a mighty fragment from the side of the shoot and it would join the rout, plunging heavily out of sight to an accompaniment of echoing crashes. The remains of the road which used to traverse the north side of the valley, right across the shoot, are still visible; now not an ibex could tread that path and live.

This was the only stone-shoot we saw in eruption, so to speak, but there were many others on the north side, some enormously high and all pitched at an astonishing angle. We had to cross one on the south side too, three miles before Minapin. The path is carried away in several places, and you have to tread gingerly along a barely-visible mark among the loose stones, which sink under your feet and start small avalanches hurtling down to the hungry-looking river far below. A few hundred yards on, comes one of those contrasts which give their peculiar quality to the landscapes of Kanjût; the unstable, desolate, terrifyingly steep stone-slopes with their touch of Dantesque horror give place to an Arcadian village set in rich woodland pastures, fields of corn and shady orchards perched on cliff-tops and a picturesque ruined castle crowning a crag in the midst. Two miles of leafy paths brought us to Minapin; here broad fields, heavy with crop, and groves of mulberry and apricot trees stretch from the foot of two glacier-valleys of Rakaposhi to the very edge of the river-bluffs. In places the orchards are brought almost within inches of the sharp-cut edge without a wall or fence of any kind, and one marvels at the survival of the rosy-cheeked children who are to be seen at every one of the farms along the cliff-tops.

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Baltit, 22nd June.

The charm of the Hunza valley lies in its amazing combination of the most diverse elements in a landscape; in its villages embedded in foliage and neat terraced fields overhung by glaciers and needle-peaks ribbed with ice; its orchards perched on dizzy cliff-tops, and romantic castles built on crags above the gorge; its plume-like waterfalls spraying vineyards cocked at terrifying angles; its irrigation-channels carried along the face of vertical cliffs to homesteads where merely to stroll in the garden after dinner must require a good head.

The Baltit reach of the Hunza valley is the finest of all. At Murtezabad you cross from the south or Nagar side of the river by a suspension bridge (the northernmost and last of the Indian Public Works Department bridges on this road) to the Hunza side. All is bare and terrible here, and the sides of the deep gorge are unstable and gashed with landslides. Then tiny orchards and neatly-terraced cornfields begin once more; suddenly you turn a corner and—there in front of you is the heart of Hunza. Imagine a spacious valley with sides from ten to eighteen thousand feet high, a winding canyon with a fierce pale-brown river threading it below, its sides green-clad up to two thousand feet or more above the stream; four miles away, right opposite you, an ancient castle on a hill covered with flat-roofed houses and trees, behind which rises a seemingly vertical mountain-face three miles high, crowned with ice-cliffs and snow cornices away up in the blue heavens!

At Aliabad a little further on we halted an hour or two for lunch, while mounted couriers dashed ahead to Baltit to inform the Mir of our approach. He met us a mile out of his capital. We took to him from the very first. Mir Muhammad Nazim Khan is a half-brother of the exiled tyrant Safdar Ali, in whose stead he was installed as Chief of Hunza by Colonel Durand after the campaign of 1891. He is a kindly, courteous, quiet-mannered man, vigorous and alert though advancing in years, of keen intelligence and wide interests, proud of his long lineage and the ancient independence of his people, but equally proud of the esteem in which he is held by the British Government and by his many European friends and acquaintances. There is much to admire on Hunza's leafy, winding highway, and we arrived sooner than we expected at the Mir's summer residence on its green spur below the little town. Tents had been pitched for us under

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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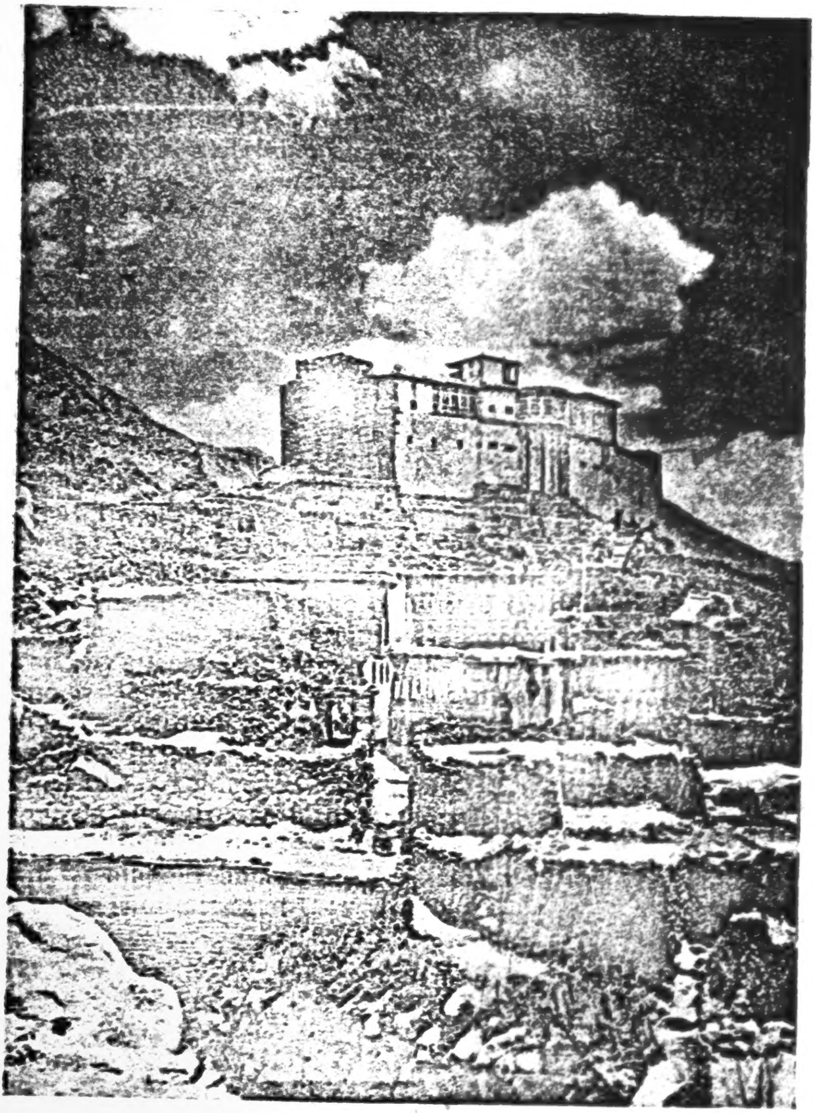

CASTLE OF THE MIRS OF HUNZA, BALTIT

[Face p. 26]

600 be seen however much you crane your neck, and close behind that again rise ice-crowned cliffs and glaciers to a height of 24,000 feet above the sea, second only to those of Rakaposhi in appalling perpendicularity. The woodwork of the castle's interior is black with age, and the balustrades are highly polished by the touch of countless hands; nor is this surprising, for the place is six hundred years old. On the top floor we found a suite of guest rooms, simply furnished with bright-coloured modern Khotan rugs and chairs locally made and carved. On the walls hang portraits of former Mirs and photographs presented to the Mir by "Sahibs" of his acquaintance. There is also a little collection of clocks, cups and other souvenirs of European friendships, and a few heirlooms such as a richly damascened sword and a dagger ornamented with the silver wire-work of Arabia, which have been handed down from Mir to Mir for centuries. But the glory of the Mir's castle is the view from its windows. One of them opens on twenty miles of the Hunza Valley with marvellous Rakaposhi above it; another shows the valley of Nagar crowned by the mighty snows of Hispar; a third looks up the gorges which lead to Cathay. What King, what Emperor has such a landscape to look upon from the windows of his palace?

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Baltit, 24th June.

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After lunch we all went down to Altit, where a game of Hunza polo had been got up specially for our benefit. Never have I played such strange polo, nor on so romantic a ground. Any number can play at the same time; the sticks used have heavy fish-shaped heads set at a sharp angle, almost impossible to hit the ball with when you first try; the ground is very long but (of necessity in a country like Hunza) narrow, and is bounded by four-foot walls of rough stones, off which the ball comes at remarkable angles; there is no penalty for "crossing" or any other foul; after one side has scored a goal, its captain picks up the ball in the same hand in which he holds his stick, gallops full speed up the ground followed by his side and at the half-way mark throws the ball up and smites it full-pitch towards the enemy's goal. I saw the veteran Mir, who in spite of his years is still a wonderful player, perform this feat, known as the *tambok*, eight times in succession, and never once did he hit the ball less than a hundred yards. There are no chukkers, the game continuing until one side or the other has scored nine goals. The result is that the ponies, though many of them are of the Badakhshi breed famed for their stamina and spirit, become dead-beat and the game flags somewhat after the first twenty minutes or so. While they last, however, the game is a most exciting and invigorating one.

A day full of new impressions concluded worthily with a sword-dance in one of the courtyards performed by nine stalwarts of the Mir's bodyguard. I had never seen such a dance—it was thrilling, finer even than the well-known Cuttack dancing of the North-West Frontier. By the light of three bonfires, with the sixteen-thousand-foot precipices behind the Castle gleaming above them in the moonlight, those Hunza guardsmen danced like men possessed, and yet in perfect time and with every step, every twist and whirl of their swords correct. The wild music, the flickering light of the fires, the

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trees, and as our baggage arrived very soon after us we were soon comfortably installed.

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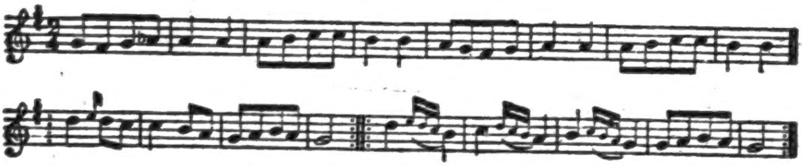
This evening at eight o'clock we were bidden to dinner with the Mir and his eldest son. Not knowing our host, we expected something rather barbaric, and would not have been surprised if we had been confronted with mountainous pilaus and nothing but our fingers to help ourselves with. Imagine our surprise, therefore, when we were ushered into a brightly-lit dining-room containing a well-appointed table laid for five in correct English style, on which in due course was served a dinner which would have done credit to any "Sahib's" house in the less sophisticated parts of India. The Occidental illusion would have been complete had it not been for the Arabian Nights music discoursed most pleasantly outside in the garden by the Mir's orchestra, which consists of "rababs" (Persian guitars) with an accompaniment of small drums and cymbals. The Chief Musician plays "first rabab" and sings Persian and Afghan ballads in a soft dreamy voice the while. He was once a shining light among the Amir's musicians at Kabul, whence (no doubt for some excellent reason) he had one day to flee. Making a living by his music and his songs, he wandered up and down the frontier from Zaimukht to Chitral until one day he found himself at Gilgit. There at the annual *jalsa* or gathering of the tribes the Mir heard him play, and at once engaged him to be Chief Musician at Baltit. Since then he has trained several Hunza youths, and a "State Band" (not that his master calls it by any such grandiloquent title) has come into being which is the joy and pride of the music-loving Mir. The Chief Musician's favourite song, which is called "Sultan Aziz Jan," tells of a wild romance of the Court of Kabul; it is full of lilt and haunting cadences. Another attractive entertainment at the Mir's dinner-parties is the dancing of boys dressed up as Turki girls in brightly-coloured Khotan silk robes with long braids of hair imported from Kashgar down their backs; pretty girls they make, too, and gracefully they dance.

Sultan Aziz Jan



Baltit, 23rd June.

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In the afternoon we were taken to see the old Palace, which is surely the most impressively-situated mediæval castle in the world. Its three storeys are built entirely of timber (if the building had been of stone it would have been destroyed by earthquakes long ago) and stands on a crag, round the base of which cluster picturesquel[illegible] the not less ancient wooden houses of the Wazir and other functiona[illegible]es. Immediately behind the castle is an abyss, the bottom of which cannot

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rows of watching faces, the swaying of the tall dancers and the rhythmic, inexorable sweep of the swords were for us a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

Our visit to the hospitable Mir came to an end only too soon, and we then found ourselves faced with the most difficult section of the whole journey. As if to balance the increased arduousness of the road, however, we received at Baltit an important addition to the strength of our party. Not only did the Mir send with us as far as the Chinese frontier a tall cheerful Havildar, with instructions that if anything happened to us he would be hanged, drawn and quartered and lose his job into the bargain, but he generously lent us for the whole of our time at Kashgar the services of two of his most valuable henchmen. Sangi Khan, whom I gladly engaged on the spot as Consular orderly, was a member of the Mir's bodyguard and a model of discipline, honesty and unflagging devotion. Stalwart, fair, good-looking and as strong as a horse, he was not only a born cragsman (in which capacity he was afterwards to prove invaluable) but an intrepid horseman with an unshakable seat. From the outset he installed himself as D.'s particular henchman, and his strong arm was never absent when there was a *mauvais pas* for her to cross. As for horsemanship, his boyish delight in showing off his skill was such that we used sometimes, when there was a suitable "gallery," purposely to drop gloves or hats for him to pick up, Cossack-fashion, from the saddle. Though far from brilliant, Sangi Khan was no fool; he could read and write the Arabic script and spoke, besides his native Burushaski, Urdu, Turki, and even a little Persian. Our other new acquisition was Murad Shah, who became our camp cook in place of the digestion-destroying Muhammad Rahim. Murad showed up less than Sangi Khan, but was no less useful, nay indispensable to us throughout our travels. A stocky, plain, quiet and unassuming but astonishingly hard-working and conscientious little man, he never failed us even under the most difficult conditions on the road; while as assistant to Daud Akhun, the Consular chef at Kashgar, he did at least three quarters of the hard work of the kitchen. In fact, his devotion to duty was a standing joke in our *ménage*, for even in the middle of the hottest summer afternoon when every one else was asleep Murad would be found scrubbing, peeling or cooking something or other in the kitchen.

CHAPTER III

OVER THE GREAT DIVIDE

THE 22 miles of track between Baltit and the next inhabited settlement, Galmit, lie through the most terrific country imaginable. The turbid Hunza River rushes through a gorge of which the sides are mountains 24,000 and 25,000 feet high. The pathway, which is entirely native-built, varies from 18 inches to 4 feet in width and is in many places carried for hundreds of yards at a stretch on stakes let into the cliff-face. Elsewhere it climbs narrow steeply-pitched clefts in the rock by means of a ladder-like arrangement of small branches and stones called *rafik*. The cliffs along the face of which so much of the track is thus laid are known as *paris*. Every time the path reaches the outside of a curve of the river, it has to climb high up the *pari* to avoid the water which laps against perpendicular and sometimes overhanging rock; on the inside of the next bend it drops down no less steeply to the stony river-bank for a stretch; then comes another *pari*, and so on. One of these on our first march took an hour to cross, and we climbed 800 feet in the process. I was not sorry that the whole march was only 9 miles in length, so that we did it comfortably enough; leaving Baltit at noon we lunched in deep beds of clover under apricot trees on the way and were in by half-past five. We camped near the river under a waterfall at a place called Ata'abad; we were told that there was a village of that name, but it was perched on a ledge of the cliffs 900 feet almost vertically above our heads, so that we could not see it. It was pleasant to camp that night for the first time in our cosy, double-fly 80-lb. tents, and dine by the dim light of hurricane lanterns on our X-pattern table under the stars. Tired though we were, we thrilled to think that we had left dak-bungalows and Public Works Department roads behind and had all Central Asia before us.

On next day's march the grandeur of the Hunza gorges came

IN THE HUNZA GORGES BETWEEN ATA'ABAD AND GALMIT

[Face [p. 29]]

to a climax. At each corner it was more difficult than at the last to believe that any way could be found through the apparently solid wall of cliff, thousands of feet high, in front of us. Except for a mile of stony hill-track at Bulchidas in the middle of the day, the path was one continuous succession of *rafiks* or ladders. It was too bad even for led horses, and our three had to be taken up to the village of Ata'abad and thence by a long *détour* high up among the mountains. As a matter of fact, from Hafiz' account the track they went by cannot have been so very much better than ours, for in several places they had to take the horses over one by one, two men at the head and two at the tail. However, they all arrived safely late in the evening.

Ghalmit is an attractive village boasting about 300 acres of fields and orchards well shaded with planes and poplars. It is walled round with lofty jagged peaks of a yellowish tint, fantastically fretted and carved into minarets and towers. The villagers, curiously enough, are mostly Wakhis who came originally from Guhyal near the headwaters of the Oxus, away up on the Roof of the World beyond the Hindu Kush; hence the name of this part of Hunza, Little Guhyal. They are a fine, tall, full-bearded race like the better type of cultivator in some parts of Eastern Persia. They speak among themselves Wakhi, an archaic dialect of Persian, of which I could not make out much; to me they spoke the debased and Indianized Persian current in Chitral and other parts of the far North-West.

Next day's march (27th June) was a memorable one. We started at 7.15, crossed one glacier, skirted round the foot of another, crossed a third and reached Khaibar at 8 p.m. It must have been a back-breaking day's work for our fifty-one porters, each of whom carried the regulation load of about fifty pounds—no bagatelle, as anyone who has tried to carry a box of that weight up a steep and stony mountain-side will testify. The porters who usually take loads from Ghalmit to Khaibar come from an Arcadian village buried in orchards called Ghulkin, the music of whose plashing stream belies the cacophony of its name, and they must be a powerful race.

We were disappointed with our first glacier, the Sasaini or Hussaini. Only a short section of it is visible from the moraine, and on the glacier itself, instead of the pure greenish-white pinnacles and grottoes and walls of ice that we had expected, all we could see was a tumbled waste of mud and

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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stones with here and there what looked like blocks of obsidian rising through it. The latter turned out on closer examination to consist of black ice, while the mud and stones proved to be merely a thin layer covering unknown depths of the same substance ; but it is first impressions that count, and ours were disappointing. The Pasu glacier is a more satisfactory specimen of its kind ; it is broader and whiter then the Hussaini, and a much longer stretch of it is visible from the high lateral moraine. It was in the afternoon, however, that we were introduced to the greatest of them all, the Batura. The upper reaches of this glacier are unexplored, even by the native mountaineers of Hunza ; its length is unknown, but is estimated at 50 miles.[1] As one views it from the top of the high lateral moraine, it comes round in a great sweep between two ranges of black serrated cliffs ; on this occasion mists veiled the snow-peaks beyond, and the great river seemed to pour down from a world of ice infinitely high and infinitely remote. For a moment, one had the impression of a flood of deadly coldness invading this earth from Outer Space.

Crossing the Batura with a caravan is a strange and somewhat arduous experience. As the surface of the glacier is always changing, there is no fixed path, and the leading coolies pick their way across as best they can. Very soon after the moraine was left behind we found ourselves in a fantastic world of glassy black cliffs alternating with forests of crystal pyramids, brooklets of pale emerald water flowing in beds of aquamarine contrasting with steep banks and ridges of dirt and stones, hideous to behold. For what seemed an age the coolies scrambled and slid and toiled ever up and down, up and down, now treading gingerly along razor-edge ridges of ice, now splashing through the pools at the bottom of shallow crevasses. Finally all the loads and—more anxious work—the horses were piloted safely across, and after a steep ascent we found ourselves on the top of the north moraine. From here it was 6 miles of easy going to Khaibar, and we treated ourselves to a picnic tea under a rock in a hollow of the moor, while the weary coolies filed slowly on. We could understand their being tired, for we were not exactly sprightly ourselves when at eight o'clock we straggled into the little lonely village

[1] Since the writer's return to England the Batura Glacier has been explored by Mr. Ph. C. Visser and party, who have found it to be 37 miles in length. The longest glacier in the Himalaya is 16 and in the Alps 10 miles long.

of Khaibar, herding the last of the coolies with alternate objurgation and encouragement. Nevertheless we had the tents up, boxes open, beds put up and ready to sleep on and were eating a hot dinner by 9·15—not a bad record.

That night and the next day it was rainy and cold, so we contented ourselves with an 8-mile march to the pretty plateau-village of Gircha. The valley with its steep crumbling sides and turbid river was the very picture of desolation and had an end-of-the-world feel about it, an impression which was deepened by the gloominess of the weather and the mists which shrouded the sinister shapes of the jagged peaks to the south. At the sixth mile from Khaibar a few huts and scanty cultivation afford welcome relief; the place is called Murkhun, and from here a forbidding gorge leads north-eastwards up among wild mountains twenty thousand feet high towards Shimshal and the Raskam country. The Shimshal route is practically the only means of access to the Raskam gorges of the upper Yarkand river, and even it is almost impassable in summer.

Next morning barely enough coolies were available for our loads, and it was half-past eight before our caravan took the road. The going was at first surprisingly good, but at the pleasant little orchards of Sost the track led up a deep and difficult valley to the north and for five miles was scarcely anywhere more than two feet broad, with breakneck slopes above and below. Shortly before we reached the junction of the Kilik and Khunjerab rivers we crossed the main stream by a swaying suspension bridge, the approach to which is distinctly alarming; one slip on the steep rocks, and if you missed the bridge you would return to India, by water, considerably quicker than you came. Then came a terrific *pari* with the most imposing views up the Khunjerab gorges, and a descent of a thousand feet to the right bank of the Kilik. Once past the junction the going was slightly better, but there were several awkward little *paris* and land-slides before we reached the bridge below Misgar. As we came to it we heard a rattling sound from the opposite bank, and looking up saw that the path there crossed a narrow but high stone-shoot. Stones, none of them very large, but some quite big enough to puncture one's skull, were rattling merrily down from a point out of sight among the cliffs above, and it was ten minutes before this performance ceased sufficiently to allow us to proceed. A stiff pull up across the cliff-face brought us on to

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

the bleak plateau of Misgar, where at a height of 10,150 feet twenty or thirty hardy Hunza families scrape a precarious livelihood out of the rock-debris of the crags above. We had now passed out of the Wakhi enclave and were in Hunza-inhabited country once more. The fields of barley were half-grown and the struggle that their production must have cost was betrayed by the size of the stone walls, or rather ramparts, which divided them and by the heaps of stones dotted about everywhere. The houses are similarly scattered about the fields, and in fact look like nothing more than rather larger heaps of stones roughly arranged into walls and covered with thatch; these, however, are only inhabited in the summer, the people in the Arctic winter of this place moving into an entirely separate group of houses huddled together under the lee of a ravine-bank at the north end of the plateau.

The wind was bitterly cold when we arrived shortly before sunset, and we were grateful for the shelter of the telegraph station, a solidly-built three-roomed house of stone. The Indian Christian clerk in charge and his assistant seemed to be quite happy at this, the remotest and probably the bleakest station on all the far-flung Indian telegraph system. The work consists entirely in receiving and despatching Kashgar messages by the weekly "dakchis" or couriers, who take twelve days, winter and summer, to do the journey across the Roof of the World.

As we approached the Mintaka the path became narrower and the going more uneven; but the Mir of Hunza's men had kept it, such as it was, in good repair and we were nowhere seriously held up. Four miles from Misgar the valley of the Kilik River bends up to the right (north) and after a series of cataracts opens out and becomes, as it were, cleaner and better ventilated. Wild roses, primulas, gentians and other flowers which we had not seen since the Burzil begin to appear, star-scattered over the greensward, and groves of graceful birches line the banks of a more pellucid river. Murkushi is a pleasant thicket of willow and ash at the junction of the Kilik and the Mintaka streams, where one's tents can be pitched on grass in shelter from the chill winds which sweep ever up to or down from the passes that lead to the Pamirs.

To D.'s huge delight, next morning there appeared two magnificent yaks belonging to the Mir, which he had kindly ordered to be brought down from their grazing-grounds for us to ride over the Mintaka. The two great beasts, "lovely

600 hairy cows " as she irreverently called them, were an inspiring sight as they minced towards us over the meadow, their absurdly short legs carrying their massive bodies as lightly as any cat's—well meriting the Mir's epithet with which he described them to us, *billi-patta* or, exactly, " pussy-foot." D. chose the black one (she has a Mazeppa-ish preference for black steeds which extends even to yaks), and before the sun had risen above the cliff-tops she and G. were trotting nimbly up the mountain-side, followed by myself on the black horse. The pace at which a yak can carry up a steep and rough path not only his own enormous weight—that were surprising enough—but a full-sized rider as well, must be seen to be believed.

Above the wide flat meadow of Builip, where the bordering cliffs are hollowed into cave-dwellings for the shepherds—northermost inhabitants of the Indian Empire—the valley steepens. Boulder-strewn slopes alternate with vivid green meadows, quite flat ; cascades plash merrily down from butt-ends of glaciers far above, and the cliffs are ornamented with flourishing beds of ice-flowers even in June. We contented ourselves with a short and easy march to Gul Khwaja, for in the circumstances there was no question of crossing the Mintaka in one day from Murkushi. The foot of the Mintaka Glacier loomed cold and grey above the rough-built Government hut, and the narrow camping-ground, amid a chaos of boulders looked from a distance most uninviting ; but under an over-hanging rock in the bright afternoon sun we were as warm and comfortable as on a Riviera beach, though the place was 13,650 feet above the sea.

Apart from a little breathlessness which D. experienced during the night, none of us suffered from the altitude ; but I developed towards nightfall one of the terrible headaches from which I suffered every time I crossed a high pass, and afterwards found to be caused not by altitude but by eye-strain due to wearing too strong sun-glasses. I got it under by means of aspirin and so achieved sleep, but alas ! the unevenness of the tent-floor was too much for my rickety borrowed camp-bed, which chose the smallest of the small hours to collapse under me. Now when a Rurki-pattern bed collapses, it does it thoroughly, and it takes three strong men twenty minutes to put it together again ; so there was nothing for it but wearily and with splitting head to extract the tangled mess of poles and cord and canvas from under my mattress and doss down on the very knobby floor. During the rest of the night I had ample time to meditate upon my folly in accepting a job which entailed spending the night reclining upon ground as high, and probably at least as bumpy, as the top of the Matterhorn.

Glorious weather favoured our crossing of the Mintaka Pass, the Great Divide which separates India from China. Only the last 1,200 feet of the ascent are really steep, though the going is rough all the way, and the rarity of the air makes the pace slow at the end. From the col, for which my aneroid gave a height of 15,600 feet, an unrivalled view of the whole Mintaka Glacier and forests of strangely-fretted dolomitic peaks tempted us to linger, but we hurried on over the slushy remains of snow-fields on the flat top of the pass, for we longed to see what was beyond. It was a great moment when we stood for the first time on the soil, or rather rocks, of China and gazed northwards upon the Pamirs. The contrast between them and the Hunza-Nagar country through which we had just passed leapt to the eye. What strikes one at once about the Pamirs is their cleanness and their spaciousness. The soil, the water, the contours of the hills are all cleaner and purer than the crumbling, decaying rocks, the muddy rivers and the black sinister mountains of the terrible country to the south of Mintaka. Again, the general level of the "Roof of the World" is so high, from 10,000 to 14,000 feet, that though the mountains go up to 18,000 and 19,000 feet they do not give the impression of overpowering height; they are dwarfed by the vast spaces all round them.

At the northern foot of the pass we found awaiting us the party which had come out from Tashqurghan to meet us. There was Sharif Beg, a big handsome young Kirghiz voluminous in a quilted coat, Russian boots and a big astrakhan-rimmed cap; he was the "Beg" of Mintaka and represented the Chinese Amban or magistrate of Sariqol district. Then there was Nadir Beg, who figures on the Consulate roll as "Watchman in Sariqol" on the lordly salary of Rs.15 (£1) a month, but is a considerable landowner, keeps several horses and looks more like a retired Indian officer than anyone else. Various other Kirghiz and Tajik Begs had come out from their camp at Mintaka Aghzi, stout hairy good-humoured people who seemed genuinely glad to see us. With this escort we made short work of the mile or so of bare but green and smiling valley which led to Lopgaz, where Kirghiz tents (*aq-oi*) had been set up for our occupation.[1]

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[1] For a description of the Kirghiz *aq-oi* see Ch. XI, p. 155.

600 As soon as we were settled into camp we asked the Begs to tea. They were shy at first, but once they had got over this and had learnt how to spread a Scottish scone with English bottled honey, they enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Like most of the Sariqolis they could all speak more or less intelligible Persian, so there was no difficulty about conversation.

Next day (3rd July) for the first time our whole caravan consisted of yaks, in all six riding and eighteen baggage animals, and they did the 27 miles to Paik in 10½ hours. For us the brilliant clearness and invigorating purity of the air, the springy turf extending for miles under our horse's hoofs, the sense of illimitable freedom given by a gallop over the spacious Pamirs, all combined to make that morning's ride from Lopgaz down to Mintaka Aghzi a memorable one. Just below the junction of the Karchanai and Mintaka streams we breakfasted largely under a rock, little knowing what was in store for us. Hardly had we travelled a mile further, when we came upon four or five *aq-ois* looking like enormous button mushrooms on the wide meadow, with countless sheep and goats and a few yaks grazing peacefully around. It was the encampment of one of the Begs whom we had entertained to tea the afternoon before, and it was out of the question to refuse a return of hospitality; accordingly we were soon sitting cross-legged on the floor of the largest *aq-oi* and absorbing enormous quantities of excellent flat circular loaves, tea, cream, dried apricots and *poi* or rich curdled yak's milk. Thanks to the air of the Pamirs, G. and I at any rate did ourselves well, to the satisfaction of our hosts; indeed, *poi* sprinkled with sugar and spread thickly over fresh Kirghiz bread makes a meal fit for a king. All the while our hosts remained standing and hungry, according to the universal and somewhat embarrassing custom of hosts in Central Asia. The women interested us as much as we, and especially of course D. in her quasi-masculine riding attire, interested them. They are not veiled, or even particularly shy [illegible] a good-looking, square-faced, high-cheekboned type, quite fair, were it not for their quaint garb they might have stepped out of any Scandinavian village. Their costume is certainly delightfully picturesque. Unlike the men, they wear turbans, but of a fashion not seen in India or Persia; of snow-white calico, tightly and neatly wound and flat-topped, the feminine headgear of the Pamir Kirghiz looks for all the world like a large

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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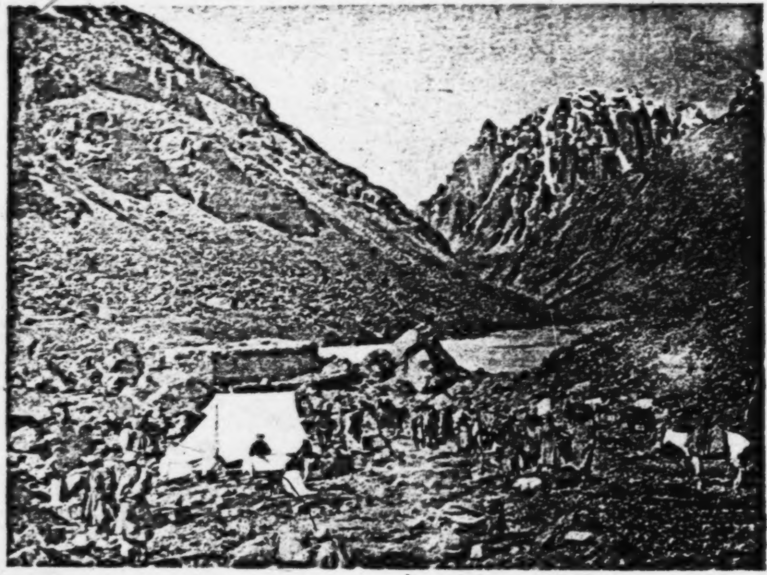
NANGA PARBAT (26,620 FEET) FROM BUNJI, INDUS VALLEY



D. AND G.C.P. AT BREAKFAST BEFORE CROSSING THE MINTAKA PASS (15,600 FEET)

[Face p. 36]

china cream-bowl perched on the wearer's head. One expects it to slop over any moment; yet its fair wearer not only balances it without difficulty, but also hangs a long strip of gaily embroidered silk down from the back of it, almost to her heels. Their party-frocks are also of this many-coloured type, of Bokhara silk or cotton; altogether, a bevy of Kirghiz beauties on the greensward in the brilliant sunlight of their native Pamirs is a gay sight indeed. The Kirghiz have an eye for colour: their huts are hung inside with richly-tinted red and blue strips of carpet, pieces of Andijan satin, coloured leather articles and, most effective of all, large reed mats decorated with characteristic designs in dyed woollen thread.

With great difficulty and protestations of eternal friendship we at last tore ourselves away from the hospitable tent of our friend—only to be confronted a mile farther on by an even larger and more opulent encampment belonging to another of our Begs, where the same performance had to be repeated. It would, of course, have been highly invidious to have eaten less *poi* and Kirghiz bread spread with cream here than we had absorbed in the tent of a rival Beg, and by the time we had finished being tactful we could hardly hoist ourselves on to our horses. We were visibly, I fear, relieved when in answer to our anxious inquiries we were informed that the 17 miles of road to Paik held no more hospitality in store for us.

At Mintaka Aghzi ("the mouth of the Mintaka") we were within a few miles of the frontiers both of Afghan Wakhan and of the Russian Pamirs; so that three Empires and one Kingdom very nearly (but not quite) met close to us. The pleasant green land seemed to be populated, apart from the few Kirghiz and their flocks and herds, entirely by golden marmots (*Arctomys aurea*). These little animals made us laugh with their curious cry, like a street-urchin's derisive whistle, the intriguing black tips to their tails and the cheeky way in which they sat up and gazed at us from the edges of their burrows, ready if we made a sign to pop down like a jack-in-the-box.

At the very draughty little Chinese post of Paik, 12,650 feet above the sea, we did not envy the lot of the N.C.O. and his ten seedy-looking men. He looked as if he smoked opium, and no wonder. This detachment was withdrawn not very long after we passed; its existence at Paik for a few years was an indirect result of the Great War.

Next morning on the march to Dafdar, 22 miles, we at first had great trouble with the caravan, which consisted this time of six camels and five yaks. I wrote feelingly about it in a letter home as follows:

> "The people of this country have no idea how to load a camel. They seem to think it ought to be done by perching as many packages on top of the beast's spine as possible, then tying a single rope round the whole and finishing up by hanging a lot more odd articles from any projecting corner they can find; the result is that before the animal has gone half a mile, various tin cans, lanterns, baskets, hat-boxes and other odds and ends have become unshipped and the balance of the load, such as it was, is destroyed. Round slips the whole affair under the camel's stomach, whereupon he takes fright and bolts. Now a camel bolting at the ungainly, lumbering trot of the species with several hundredweight of assorted luggage raining off him like leaves in autumn is one of the funniest sights imaginable when it is somebody else's luggage; but when it is one's own cases of whisky, medicine chests or favourite yakdans that are dangling from the beast's tummy, the humour of the situation is not so striking. This happened to every one of the camels, and to most of the yaks as well, within the first two miles of the march, and we all expended much energy and language helping the men to put the loads on again. Once the camels had been loaded in the proper way, *i.e.*, with the load in two separately tied up and compact parts hanging on each side of the animal and balancing each other, all went well; but do you suppose the owners took the lesson to heart? Not a bit of it. Next morning all the luggage was perched on the top of the camels exactly the same as of old."

A mile or so below Ujadbai we passed a high, craggy mountain on the west side of the river called Qizqurghan or the "Maidens' Castle." Nadir Beg pointed out to me the ruins of a fortress high up on its face, and told me there was a local legend about it which he had once heard but had forgotten. It was something about a Persian princess who had long ago reigned over Sariqol from this impregnable castle with a bodyguard of maidens, Amazons as it were, and had allowed no man to come near. Water they had obtained by means of deep wells and Persian wheels; it was said that remains of these wheels (otherwise unknown in the Pamirs) were still to be seen among the mountains. Remembering this story of Nadir's I was much interested to read afterwards in Sir Aurel Stein's *Ruins of Desert Cathay* (vol. I, p. 90) a description of these ruins, which he reached after a difficult climb. The walls, he says, extend for 450 feet, average 16 feet in thickness and are over 20 feet high where best preserved. They contain thin layers of juniper twigs, like the ancient Chinese border wall in the Lop desert, and probably belong to the same period.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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More interesting still, the famous Buddhist pilgrim Hsuan-tsang, who returned to China from India viâ Afghanistan and the Pamirs in A.D. 642, saw this same fortress, which was even then in ruins, and relates the legend he heard locally about it. This was to the effect that a Chinese princess of the Han Dynasty had been betrothed to the King of Persia and was being escorted to his capital from Peking. At Chieh-p'an-t'o (Sarikol, Chinese Pamirs) the way was blocked by robbers and the princess' Sarikoli escort placed her for safety on an isolated peak protected by precipices. Here, well-guarded though she was, the Sun-god visited her, and when at last the way was clear and the escort came to fetch her, they found her with child. They were so impressed that they begged her to stay and rule over them. The chiefs reigning in Sarikol in the pilgrim's time were descended from the son then born to her. Sir Aurel also mentions that the Afrasiab hill near Tashgurghan is supposed to be called after the son of the Princess, who was buried there. He says nothing about remains of Persian wheels.

From Dafdar, where there is a flourishing colony of Wakhi immigrants from Afghanistan who have made the desert blossom like the rose; the road is flat and almost featureless the whole 34 miles to Tashqurghan. Only the finely-scarped Sariqol range on the left and, on clear days, a distant glimpse of the great white dome of Muz Tagh Ata in front, relieve the monotony of the view. Three miles from Tashqurghan, at an outlying farmstead of Tughlan Shahr, we were met by a reception-party consisting of the Aqsaqal or British agent at Tashqurghan, the local *Pir* or chief of the Maulai sect and a few other Maulais and British subjects. In the farm-house we were entertained at our first *chah-jan*, the wayside reception-feast which is such a feature of the elaborate ceremonial of Chinese Central Asia. We had only just eaten our sandwiches, but rather than disappoint the good British subjects we did our best with the *pilaus*, sour cream and local bread. Hardly had we consumed the last mouthful of which we were capable when we were informed that the *Pir* of the Maulais had invited us to a similar feast at his house a mile away! There was nothing for it but to climb on to our steeds and proceed to the Pir's house with as much grateful alacrity as we could muster. A regular procession followed us across the fields. Meanwhile a thunderstorm had been brewing, and before we were half-way a heavy shower of rain and hail came on. There being apparently only one table and three chairs in Tughlan Shahr, these had to do duty at both entertainments, and we were regaled with the sight of our dining-table galloping ahead of us on a frisky horse, closely followed by the chairs. A hundred yards from home the table began to come to pieces, and its legs soon strewed the fields ; the sportsman who carried it, however, was quite unperturbed ; excited small boys collected the pieces and we were astonished to find the hard-worked piece of furniture, richly dight with loud-hued table cloth and almost literally groaning with food, awaiting us in the Pir's innermost drawing-room when we arrived !

Between Tughlan Shahr and Tashqurghan the river flows in many channels across meadows of close-cropped grass, covered with cows, ponies and donkeys grazing. Tashqurghan is the seat of a Chinese Amban or District Magistrate, and this gentleman ought, we were informed, to have fired a salute of three guns and had the troops out in honour of our arrival ; rather to our relief, he considered we were not important enough and omitted to do so. He contented himself with sending his large red paper visiting card by the hand of his secretary and interpreter, a sly-looking person with a remarkable fluency in Persian, Turki and Chinese as well as his native Tajik. The house of the Aqsaqal, which is used as a rest-house by British travellers and is well situated on a bluff overlooking the bazaar, is a small place consisting of an outer courtyard with servants' quarters and an inner one, pleasantly shaded by willows, with two small " sahibs' rooms " and a kitchen. Here we made ourselves comfortable enough for the three nights we stayed at Tashqurghan.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER IV

THE MOUNTAIN ROAD TO CATHAY

THE name Tashqurghan means in Turki " stone fort ", 101
and the place is probably identical with the *λίθινος πύργος* of which Ptolemy speaks as having been the extreme western emporium of Serikē (China). At that time it was called by the Chinese Hopanto and was the capital of the frontier district of that name.[1] Now once more it is the headquarters of the Chinese Amban of Pu-li or Sariqol, who rules a long strip of country along the eastern rim of the Pamir plateau. Sariqol was made into an administrative [631]
district at the beginning of the present century, when it came into prominence from the Chinese point of view owing to the occupation of the neighbouring Pamirs by Russia. For [648]
years, indeed, the Tsar's Government kept a detachment of infantry at Tashqurghan, regardless of the fact that it was [712]
Chinese territory ; the solid mud-brick fort built by them is still in good repair though it has been empty since its evacuation in 1920 by the last remnants of the former Cossack garrison of the Pamirs. Ethnically, the district is interesting 162
as being populated in about equal proportions by two contrasting races. These are, firstly, the Tajiks, who are remarkably pure specimens of the original *Homo alpinus* stock and have inhabitated this remote corner of High Asia since the dawn of history ; secondly, the Kirghiz. These latter belong to the tribe called by the Russians Kara-Kazak ; they are the southernmost branch of the great Kirghiz race, and they can only live as far south as the Pamirs, the immense elevation of which makes up for the low latitude and produces a climate as rigorous as that of the Steppes.

Two entirely different routes, each about ten marches in 487
length, connect Tashqurghan with Kashgar. The one usually followed in summer is the eastern or Chichiklik route which,

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[1] Stein, " Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan," pp. 71–2.

487 after crossing four passes between 12,000 and 16,000 feet high and traversing three different valleys sparsely inhabited by Kirghiz, debouches upon the great plain of Central Asia near the flourishing town of Yangi Hissar. The winter route goes north from Tashqurghan over the easy Ulugh Rabat Pass (circ. 13,500 feet) to the Rangkul Pamir, past the beautiful lakes of Little Qarakul and Basikul, and then down through the tremendous gorge of the Gez River which cuts through the Kashgar Range between the great ice-clad massifs of Qungur (25,146 feet) and Chakragil (22,180 feet). It comes out on to the Kashgarian plain at Tashmalik, whence the city is reached in two marches.

131 [132] [181] Sariqol is about the most unpopular district among Chinese officials in all Eastern Turkistan. Its capital is 10,250 feet above the sea and has a climate which may be described as three months spring and nine months winter; most of the ten days' journey from the nearest civilization has to be performed on horseback instead of in the Peking cart beloved of the travelling Celestial; last but not least, the inhabitants are an unruly lot, very different from the timid and peaceable Turkis of the plains. Small wonder then that the Governor of Chinese Turkistan at Urumchi has the utmost difficulty in finding men for the post. But he does find them, and what is more he removes and replaces them if (as may be expected sometimes in a place so remote from supervision) they misbehave themselves; a fact which throws a remarkable light upon the effectiveness of Governor Yang's control over a district which is no less than two months' journey from his headquarters.

133 But though the Ambans may regard themselves as Ugolinos condemned to an Inferno of cold, the summer visitor to Tashqurghan will find much that is pleasing in the marvellous clearness and purity of its air, its spacious greensward threaded with pellucid streams and the beautiful shapes of the mountains which stand in glittering ranks all round, yet not too near it. Conspicuous among these is Muz Tagh Ata, "Father of the Ice Mountains," blazing in all its mighty mass of whiteness over the vivid green of the meadows. Though it is 24,388 feet high, the enormous width of Muz Tagh Ata detracts from its beauty as a mountain, and it does not compare for a moment with Rakaposhi or Nanga Parbat; but its very size is impressive, and the vast extent of its snowfields and glaciers, the whiteness of which has an intense

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

quality not seen in lower snows, makes it an impressive spectacle. The wide floor of the Sariqol Valley is dotted with homely little farmsteads, each nestling snugly beside a clump of willows. The soil is remarkably good; wheat, barley and oats sown in May are reaped in October, and two crops of lucerne are usually taken. Sweet-smelling purple orchises, gentians, vetches of all colours and primulas of large size line the paths in June and July. 133 241 [134]

The Amban of Sariqol, our first acquaintance in the Chinese official world, was not a favourable example of his kind. He was an opium-smoker, and shortly after our arrival at Kashgar was relieved of his post. I called on him my first morning, as I was determined to be polite in spite of his having practically ignored us the previous day. As I arrived only half an hour after the appointed time, nothing was ready, and the Aqsaqal and I had to stand in the waiting-room of the "Yamen" or magistrate's quarters amid an interested crowd of bottle-washers and hangers-on, while a servant hurriedly brought in a small table, two chairs and some uninviting-looking sweetmeats. Finally the Amban came in and we both sat down. Pale green tea tasting strongly of hot water was our tipple; conversation, I regret to say, somewhat flagged, the old Amban being obviously under the influence of opium while my style was cramped by the "gallery" standing close around and following every syllable, every mouthful. I was relieved to be able to escape after twenty minutes or so of this entertainment. 574

The Amban was in better form when he returned my call the same afternoon, and did his best to make amends for his previous remissness. This encouraged us to invite him, his young son, the Commandant of the Garrison and his adjutant, and the Pir of the Maulais to tea the following afternoon. I found out afterwards that it was a mistake to ask the Pir, as the Chinese seldom sit at table with their subjects. D. spent the whole morning making scones and sweets, and the party was a great success. Conversation flourished, the Amban being quite talkative. He spoke in Chinese to the Adjutant, who translated into Turki to Nadir Beg, who translated into Persian to me and I into English to D. So:—

AMBAN (to Adjutant): How old is the *Tai-tai* (lady)?
ADJUTANT (to Nadir Beg): How old is the *Khanum*?
NADIR BEG (to me): How old is the *Mem-sahiba*?
I (to D.) How old are you?

574 D. (to me): Twenty-five.

I (to Nadir Beg): *Bist o panj.*

NADIR BEG (to Adjutant): *Zhigima-besh.*

ADJUTANT (to Amban) Twenty-five (whatever it is in Chinese!)

Next question, by the same route, from the Amban: "How is it that whereas, owing to the intense cold of this barbarous country, we and our subjects wear quantities of clothes right up to the chin, the Tai-tai wears nothing but a skirt and a closely-fitting garment cut low at the neck?" Sensation on arrival of this question! After some deliberation we concoct a suitable reply, to the effect that the country from which the Tai-tai comes, Scotland, is intensely cold, far colder than the Chinese Pamirs, and that this country seems quite hot to her—hence the scantiness of her attire!

After tea D. visited the wives of the O.C. Garrison and the Adjutant. She told me afterwards that both were Tajiks and the Adjutant's wife very pretty. After the visit at their house the ladies came back with D. to her room, and D. had to show them her dresses and keep them amused till a quarter past eight, when they finally departed.

484 The last lap of our long trek, from Tashqurghan to Kashgar
by the Chichiklik route, was in many ways the most interesting
563 of all. We slept each night in Kirghiz tents which had been
collected for us by the Beg of the neighbourhood; this was
arranged each day, in the Tashqurghan district, by an excellent Tajik orderly or *yayieh* sent with us by the Magistrate of
Tashqurghan. Our transport was similarly arranged, ponies,
yaks, camels or donkeys according to what was available. As
soon as we entered the Yangi Hissar district an orderly from
the Amban of that place met us and performed similar services.
A tower of strength to the party was Nadir Beg, already
mentioned as having met us at the Mintaka, who looked after
us in a most fatherly manner and to whom we took a great
liking. A tall, handsome, black-bearded, cheerful, energetic
man of about forty, a good horseman and hard as nails,
Nadir is a splendid specimen of the Tajik race; he is particularly useful on the march in Sariqol, for he seems to have
known every one of the people, Tajiks and Kirghiz alike, from
522 their childhood up. He also has a strong sense of humour.
I shall never forget the glee with which he told us what his
small son had said to him on seeing Gerard Price wearing an
oiled-silk waterproof cover over his sun-helmet. "Daddy,"

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AI1 Sinkiang AI1

said the little boy, " why does the Sahib wear a lamb's tummy 522 on his head ? " The problem of supplies was not so difficult 563 as we had expected. Milk, cream and butter were always to be had from the Kirghiz, but we only once or twice got eggs and never a chicken. At the shop of the one Hindu *bunnia* at Tashqurghan D. was able to replenish her store of flour, oil, dried fruits, walnuts and matches for the onward journey.

On 9th July we left Tashqurghan in state, our caravan now 574 consisting of 17 ponies and one donkey. The Amban made amends for having ignored our arrival by arranging an elaborate *chah-jan* or farewell tea-drinking, combined with a parade of the entire garrison of Tashqurghan. This took place by the road-side about a mile from the bazaar. In the three-walled mud hut used for these ceremonies D. and I sat on the edge of a platform on each side of a wooden tray containing a china bowl of green tea for each of us, and two or three saucers of currants, almonds and strange Chinese confectionery tasting mostly of dust. On one side of the interior of the " reception-pavilion " sat the Amban and O.C. Tashqurghan, on the other G. and our Aqsaqal, while the Turki-speaking interpreter, standing, did his best with the Aqsaqal to keep the very sticky conversational ball rolling between us and the Chinese. The parade consisted of about thirty men and four enormous red banners ; the drill was most successful, until an unexpected evolution had to be performed in connexion with the photograph I took of the army, which caused the O.C. to march and counter-march his troops over half the area under his command before he finally got them to face the camera. Farewells and much hand-shaking completed the proceedings. It may be mentioned here that when a Chinaman shakes hands, he shakes his own hand, the other person doing the same opposite him, both parties bowing deeply the while.

Escaped at last from ceremonial, we revelled once more in 487 an exhilarating canter over the grassy pamir ; past Tiznaf and Chashman, groups of tiny farmsteads, each with its willow-clump, standing amid wide fields of corn and rich pasture ; past bend after bend of the river, running clear as crystal through the meadows with many a fine pool, a possible trout-stream wickedly wasted in unstocked emptiness.

Leaving the Sariqol valley ten miles north of Tashqurghan we mounted steadily for five hours and camped at 12,300 feet in the narrow Darshart ravine. Next day we crossed the

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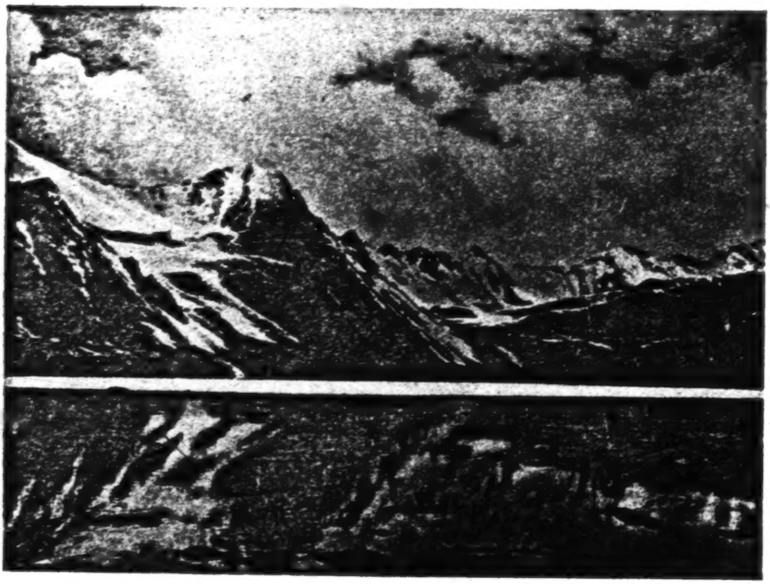
CROSSING THE YANGI DAVAN (16,100 FEET)



UNMAPPED LAKE AT HEAD OF YAMBULAK VALLEY; SPURS OF MUZ TAGH ATA IN BACKGROUND

[Face p. 46]

457 Kök Moinak pass (15,400 feet) which was quite free of snow. There was only one serious obstacle on the way up, and that was within a couple of miles of the Darshart camping-place. The path had been entirely washed away by the stream, which cascaded for a hundred yards between perpendicular walls, and it was further partially blocked by masses of ice jutting out over the stream-bed. It took us, working hard, over an hour to get the caravan up through these narrows. Our camp that night, at 14,500 feet on the Chichiklik (" speckled," i.e. flowery) plateau, was the highest we had yet had.

From Chichiklik the shortest route to Toilebulung is down through the Tangitar or " Dark Gorge," which from all accounts is well named, so narrow and dark is it and so rough and boulder-strewn the stream-bed. In the high-water season it is dangerous, and we preferred to go two marches round by the Yambulak *Jilgha* (valley). On the way we crossed the Yangi Davan (New Pass) the top of which was covered with wide but firm-surfaced snow-fields and proved to be 16,100 feet above the sea. This was the highest pass we crossed between Srinagar and Kashgar. From the top, to our surprise and delight, we saw below us to the north a beautiful lake of purest sapphire lapped in the snowy peaks at the head of the Yambulak valley. This lake is not shown on any map; it is quite half a mile broad and when we saw it was still, owing to the great elevation (15,500 feet), partially covered with the ice of winter.

In the Yambulak Jilgha we made our first acquaintance with unspoilt, off-the-beaten-track Kirghiz of the type we were afterwards to know and like so well. Five miles down [622] from the pass, in the middle of one of the sudden but short-lived summer blizzards of the Pamirs, we found the headman of the little community, Ibrahim Beg, and his son Juma waiting [272] for us with tea and a small carpet spread out on the wet ground. Politeness dictated a halt of at least five minutes while we [263] made a pretence of sipping the salty tea (the Kirghiz cannot afford sugar in their tea, so they use salt, though they much prefer their tea sweet) and felt the snowflakes insinuating themselves down our necks. Two miles further down at a height of 12,650 feet, we came to the *aq-ois*, pitched on either side of the brawling stream in a sheltered bend of the valley. The afternoon sun now shone strongly again, and as we passed the first huts its rays illumined exquisitely an idyllic scene—three or four Kirghiz girls in their quaint dresses and turbans

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

487 milking the sheep and goats by the water's edge while the men and children looked on.

[231] Next morning we awoke to find a brilliant sun shining on a cheerful scene composed of yaks, yak-calves, donkeys, ponies, sheep, goats, curly-headed children, rainbow-clothed white-turbaned women and one to two shaggy men (the rest were still in bed), against a background of fat mushroom-like *aq-ois*, foaming river and steep green hill-side. I had decided to halt a day at this pleasant spot, partly to give the caravan a rest, partly in order to reconnoitre on foot a pass called the Merki Davan by which I hoped to cross into the upper Qaratash valley and thus gain access to one of the blank patches on the map which Sir Aurel Stein had advised me to explore. To cut a long story short,[1] Gerard Price and I, assisted by Juma Beg with his men and yaks, reached a height of 16,500 feet on a snowy spur, from which point we could see that the "pass" was quite out of the question for our caravan. It was nothing but a lofty ridge of rock at least 17,000 feet high, deep in snow even on the south side and defended also by steep ice-slopes.

[758] Meanwhile D. passed a strenuous but amusing day with the Kirghiz ladies, all of whom clamoured (mostly quite unnecessarily) for medical treatment and seemed to appreciate presents of quinine tabloids and castor oil even more than the beads and other small gifts which D. had brought for them. At any rate, she made herself very popular, for next morning when we marched down the valley their farewells were most affectionate and they walked at her stirrup quite a long way down the valley. One of the younger ones was perfectly lovely; the coloured sketch of her which was done by D. on this occasion and is reproduced as a frontispiece to this book does not flatter her unduly. As a rule, however, the faces of the Kirghiz women, though broad-browed and pleasing, are too flat for beauty.

[37] As we filed down the Yambulak valley it became ever narrower and its sides higher and steeper. The profusion of wild flowers was a revelation; anemones, primulas, king-cups, columbines, antirrhinums, campanulas, asphodel and many others of which we did not know the names grew in masses, especially in places where the sheep and goats could not get at them. Cascades of wild roses grew out of every

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[1] For an account of this climb, see "Geographical Journal," November, 1925, p. 388.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

Art (13,340 feet) and the Kashka Su (12,900 feet) respectively. 487
They were very much alike; winding ravines among high rocky hills; a glen thickly carpeted with alpine flowers, narrowing and steepening as we ascended it; a last back-breaking ascent, and then the col, a rounded ridge with out-cropping rocks and turf enamelled with tiny blooms. We lingered long on the Kashka Su; we had been travelling over or among mountains for such an age—a golden age—that it was difficult to believe that we were crossing our very last pass. From the summit we looked with interest towards the north, hoping to see the plains of Kashgaria spread out below us, but as far as the eye could reach lay a jumble of green ridges surmounted here and there by a snow-flecked crag and deeply seamed by silver torrents, the music of which floated gently up to us. Behind us to the south and south-east a magnificent array of giant peaks, the little-known mountains of the Upper Yarkand River valley, bounded the horizon with walls of cliff and glacier.

Descending steeply for 1,500 feet over meadows covered with asphodel we found a small tent pitched for us and a way-side tea-drinking prepared by a delightful old Father Christmas of a Beg called Mirza Ahmad Beg of Taumtara, a side-glen to the north-west. We greeted our host in the tent and were at 574
once confronted with a mountainous collation of freshly-killed 262
and exceedingly tough mutton, leather-like bread, a kind of oily and very indigestible pastry and tea with salt in it. Being fortunately left to ourselves with this repast, we were able, ostensibly at any rate, to do our duty as guests by disposing of quite a large quantity of the food; this we effected by the simple process of eating our own sandwiches and putting the Beg's viands in the haversack thus emptied. Meanwhile the Beg's wife and sister, who must have heard of D.'s fame from Yambulak, were round the corner in gorgeous robes and exaggerated Kirghiz head-dresses, awaiting their opportunity. As we emerged from the tent after our deceitful meal, we saw them in all their glory crossing the stream on their ponies, a picturesque sight. A lengthy interview with D. in the tent followed, while I talked to the old Beg outside. When the ladies had at last finished sampling D.'s medicinal stock and wisdom (for that is what they had really come after), we continued on our way. D. said that they had been rather 487
heavy on hand and had no small-talk; they gave her the impression of being *mazlum-kishis* indeed (I may explain that

487 cranny in the perpendicular rocks. Among the very few people we saw was an interesting figure; this was the Qazi or native judge of Koserab on his way with three or four men on horses to Tashqurghan, whither he had been summoned by the Amban to try cases according to the Shar'iat or law of the Qur'an. The party forded the river just before meeting us, a picturesque sight; the white-bearded old village judge, with his book of *dala'il* (precedents) and his Qur'an wrapped in a cloth under his arm, rode straight-backed and vigorous at the head of his following.

[221] [164] That night (14th July) we camped in wild and grand, but less green and flowery, country at Toilebulung, the winter headquarters of the Yambulak Kirghiz who grow their crops there and bury their dead in curious little domed mausolea. The elevation was only 9,650 feet, the first time we had been down to four figures since Gircha in the Hunza valley, sixteen days before. We mopped our brows and complained of the stuffiness of these low-lying valleys, until some one pointed out that we were still far higher up than the most elevated Indian hill-station.

432 [431] Next day we bid adieu to the Yambulak Kirghiz with many invitations and promises to visit them again one day. I had already given old Ibrahim Beg with much ceremony an official present in the shape of a watch. Just before leaving I discovered that he had already disposed of it to Hafiz for five taels (about 15*s*.). As it was only worth about four taels, and as I wanted to impress upon the Kirghiz the enormity of the insult to the British Empire, I publicly reproved Ibrahim, took back the watch, made him repay the 5 taels to Hafiz, and then gave him a cash present of 4 taels instead of the watch. I then, supposing that Hafiz really wanted a watch to tell the time by, sold him the Government watch for 4 taels. The following day one of the other orderlies told me that Ibrahim had bought back the watch from Hafiz for 4½ taels, evidently thinking that as there was such a to-do about the article, it must be a good investment. It was not till after we reached Kashgar, however, that I heard the sequel from Harding, who passed Yambulak two days after us. This was that Ibrahim Beg changed his mind once more about the watch and sold it to Harding's orderly for 3½ taels! Turkis and Kirghiz alike are born traders and would sell the noses off their faces if they could get good money for them.

487 On each of the next two days we crossed passes, the Ter

487 *mazlum-kishi* is the Turki for "woman" and means literally "oppressed person"). [114] However, small-talk is not so necessary when you have plenty of diseases, as these oppressed ones apparently had, and D. scored another social success. A couple of hours later we were settling into comfortable *aq-ois* [137 provided by Father Christmas on a meadow by the Kinkol River. Near by grew many mushrooms, a rare treat. On the [134 mountain-sides all round we could hear the red-legged partridges calling; I accepted their invitation, and a brace of them soon graced our camp larder. I may mention that between Yambulak and Kichik Karaul not a day passed that we did not bag partridges or hares, or both, for the pot. Next day I had a misfortune in the shape of a nasty fall with the black horse, which came down suddenly at the trot and threw me on to a sharp stone, which bruised my thigh somewhat severely, causing me to faint twice with the pain. I rode the rest of the march (and the two following days) on a yak or pony with my leg in a sling, neither a comfortable nor a rapid mode of progression. This delayed us very much and we took a day longer to get into Kashgar than we would otherwise have done.

Further down the valley became very wild and rugged, and raging glacier-torrents from the Qizil Tagh or "Red Mountains" on our right had to be crossed as well as the main stream. Here, at a place called Sasik Tika, we noticed a single poverty-stricken *aq-oi*. I distinctly remember commenting on the sinister look of the valley at this point. I was reminded of this the following spring, when I was present at the trial by the Magistrate of Yangi Hissar of the Kirghiz to whom the *aq-oi* belonged for the murder of a Chitrali traveller.[1]

137 Soon after leaving the next camp, Toqoi Bashi, the first real trees we had seen since Tashqurghan appeared, and after that we were never without some. Short, thick-set trees they were, with fluted bark and small, pointed leaves; further down the valley some of them attained great size. We did not then know to what species they belonged, but they afterwards became very familiar. They were the desert poplar (*P. varifolia*, Turki *toghraq*) which is the characteristic tree of the Tarim Basin and, outside the oases, the only one that grows at all freely.

487 That night we camped at the first settled village of Kashgaria, Kichik Qaraul or "The Little Fort" It was pleasant to sit on the grass and munch juicy melons, nectarines and

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[1] For an account of this trial, see Ch. X.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AI1 Sinkiang AI1

peaches while we watched the sunset glow fade upon rich fields of maize and peas, on cosy little farms nestling under clumps of tall bushy poplars and on warm yellow river-bluffs along the foot of which springs of pure water bubbled up among the meadows. 487

By mid-day on 18th July the hills on either side of us had sunk to insignificance and we came to a place where the Chinese of former days had built, *more suo*, a wall across the open valley, a wall the ends of which were quite in the air, and which could never have been defensible, even when first built. Here, at a small mediæval-looking fort called Chong (Big) Qaraul, an amiable Chinese Muhammadan *qaraulchi* or barrier officer fed us on melons and apricots on a platform under spreading planes. Before us extended a vast indefinite expanse, pale yellow and brown with wide shadows lying on it where the oases were; nearest to us, a long line of trees some ten miles away marked Ighiz Yar, our halting-place. We thrilled to think that we were looking upon the great plain of Central Asia, the mighty belt of oasis-fringed desert which stretches for 2,000 miles from Kashgar to the mountains of Inner Mongolia. [712]

Ighiz Yar ("The High Bluff") proved to be a pleasant stretch of cultivated land dotted with farmsteads of mud-brick joined by leafy lanes down which ran brooks of clear water. Except that the soil was obviously far more fertile—the loess of Kashgaria is as a matter of fact one of the most fertile soils in the world—it might have been a Persian village. Our lodging proved to be a small house near the lower end of the oasis, consisting of one very large room with a raised floor and a large square skylight, and a small windowless room opening out of it. There was a third chamber, but this was not available as the entire family moved into it when we took possession; as their ingress and egress was through the big room, the privacy of the latter left something to be desired. Our two rooms opened on to a courtyard in which (as the house boasted no garden) our retinue took up their quarters; they also opened on a cow-byre. 342 [134]

Harding caught us up at Ighiz Yar, and next day all four of us went on together to Yangi Hissar. The (Hindu) British Aqsaqal of the place, a wealthy Shikarpuri banker called Ratan Chand, sent a smart buggy to meet us half-way, and in this D. and I, drawn by the fieriest of Ferghana stallions, performed the rest of the march in what must surely have 487

487 been record time. Gerard's pony also tried to break the flat-racing record for Kashgaria on this stretch, with the result that four miles out of Suget we came up with G. standing ruefully by his steed and holding half of one of its hoofs in his hand ; it had put its foot into a hole, split its hoof, crossed its legs and turned head over heels all at once, it appeared. Fortunately the ground was soft. In a leafy suburb of Yangi Hissar we were welcomed with mounds of toffee, melons of vast size and many loyal speeches by the Indian Shylocks of the town.
622 Further on the District Magistrate and the Commandant of the Garrison met us and we went through the formality of the official tea-drinking. The Amban was a complete contrast to him of Tashqurghan ; he was a stout, clean-shaven, intelligent type of person, rather like a mediæval monk. He had once, he told us, been a student at the Peking law-schools and
291 had served as a judge somewhere on the coast. The Celestial effect of his black satin coat and his cream-coloured silk skirt covering close-fitting white calico trousers was somewhat spoilt by a bowler hat which had seen better days.

Escorted by the local soldiery we moved slowly in procession
487 into Yangi Hissar. It was a relief to enter the cool, dustless streets of the bazaars, which here are not domed as in Persia
[443] but roofed after a fashion with sacking and wattles. The shops struck us as neater and cleaner than those of India or Persia, the counters of the many food-shops, fruiterers, butchers, etc., being well scrubbed. The Chinese shops are particularly neat and tidy, and reminded one of village "general shops" at home.

574 Hardly had we arrived at the garden of the empty Swedish Mission bungalow when the Amban and Commandant, most courteously according to Chinese ideas, came to call. Fortunately the Aqsaqal had prepared tea and a noble spread of fruit and sweets. During this function we were treated to a little bit of Chinese servants' manners which very nearly upset our equilibrium for good and all. When he sat down, the Amban took off his bowler and handed it to his servant, who stood behind his chair. The servant, who already wore a decrepit Homburg, took the Amban's hat and coolly, as if it were the most natural thing to do with it, clapped it on top of his own ! During the rest of the meal we all had to keep our eyes firmly averted from the two-hatted servant, for anything more ludicrous than the sight of his solemn, old-family-butler face surmounted by the Amban's seedy

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

bowler and his own archaic Homburg, one on top of the other, 574
cannot be imagined.

We thought we were going to have the comfortable Mission house to sleep in, but it appeared that owing to a mistake the keys had not been obtained from the missionaries at Kashgar, who are kind enough always to put the house at the disposal of the Consulate if required. Nothing else having been arranged we had eventually to doss down in a small farm-house on the outskirts of the town. It was not very comfortable, but we made the best of it and by half-past six I was able to change my clothes and drive round to call on the Amban, the Commandant and an ex-Amban who was still living in the town. In almost every district we visited in 622 our subsequent wanderings we found one, sometimes two, ex-Ambans. Apparently it takes months, even years, to hand over charge, owing presumably to the mess in which each Magistrate gets his work, particularly the financial side of it. So much so, I believe, that it is the custom in China for his friends to congratulate an official formally on the successful handing 574 over of his charge. Next day before proceeding on our journey, we attended an official lunch at the Yamen, where we were received with much pomp and ceremony including a salute of three "guns," or rather bangs from small mortars stuck upright in the ground. The decorations of the room in which [353] we lunched, though faded, were in excellent taste; red chairs covered with black silk; a few panels of decorative Chinese writing; windows of a kind of fretwork in chaste geometrical designs, with ancient lace instead of glass, and little else in the room beyond the table. A Chinese feast is so long and complicated an affair that it merits more detailed description than I can afford it here, and I must therefore refer the reader to a later chapter.[1] Suffice it to say that we were as much impressed by the courtesy and considerateness of our host as by the fearful tinned and dried delicacies from China Proper such as shark's fin, sea-slugs, fish-entrails, seaweed and bamboo-root on which he appeared to pride himself most. All these *plats* seemed to us to consist of substances either glutinous or messy, or both, and to taste of nothing in particular.

Wayside tea-drinkings similar to those of the day before, 487 but in the reverse order, heralded our departure from Yangi Hissar in a landau kindly sent out for us from Kashgar by the Taoyin. Twenty miles of perfectly flat country, alternating between rich cultivation and howling wilderness in the true Central Asian fashion, brought us to the village of Yapchan just before dark. Here we were somewhat depressed to find that instead of the house and garden we had been promised, we were to spend the night in two or three tiny, unventilated rooms in a very small and dirty public *serai*. It appeared that the owner of the house at which Europeans usually stay had inconsiderately died just before our arrival. Half the loafers and children of Yapchan enjoyed an excellent close-up view of the three of us unpacking, dining and going to bed. Next morning D. said that she had not been by any means the only occupant of her room ; she counted, I think, seventy-one others.

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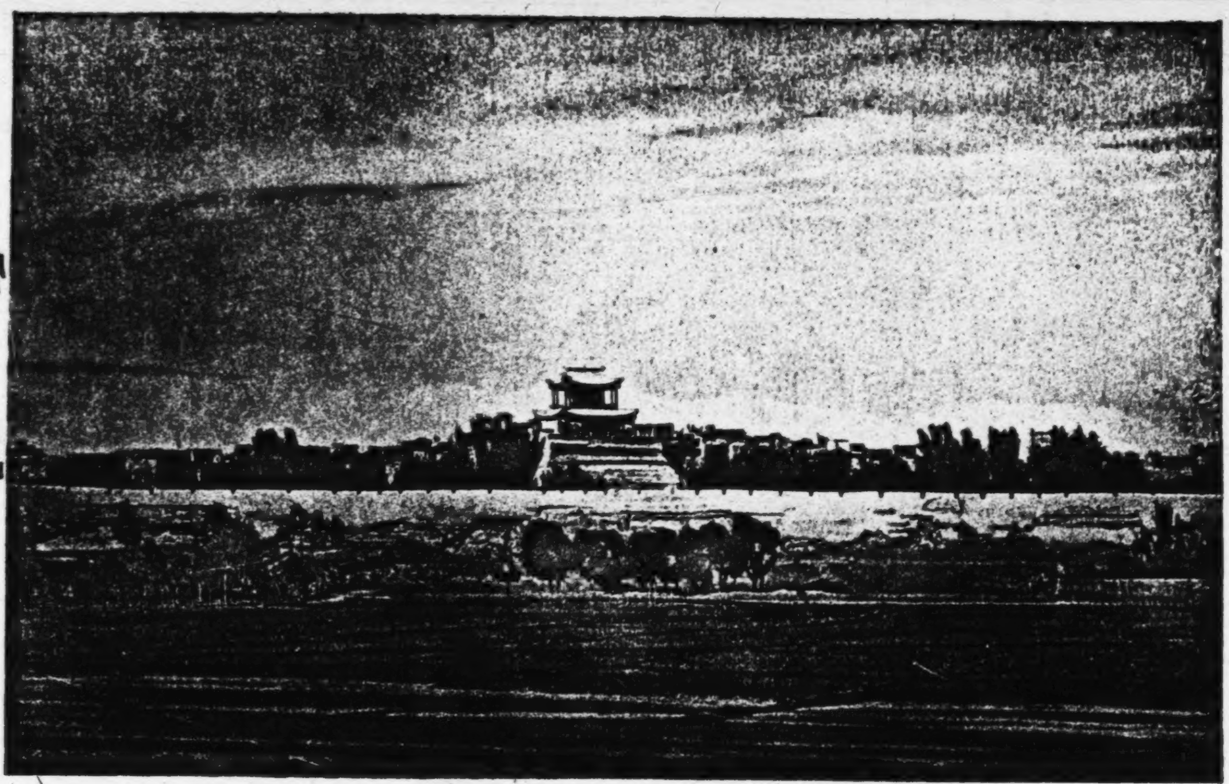
[1] See Ch. VI, pp. 82–84.

On 21st July, 1922, we rode and drove the last 24 miles to Old Kashgar. Some three miles out we were met with an elaborate wayside reception by Mr. Fitzmaurice, the outgoing Vice-Consul who had been holding charge of the Consulate General pending my arrival, supported by the office staff, the Aqsaqal and other British subjects of Kashgar. A mile further and we were being greeted at a pleasant pavilion among willow-groves by the Chinese officials, representatives of the Swedish missionaries and the Russian colony, and others. Here we were entertained at an excellently-cooked and almost European lunch by the friendly and genial Taoyin of Kashgar, after which we listened and replied to speeches of welcome in various unfamiliar tongues. A long and dusty procession through bazaars and surburbs brought us late in the afternoon to "Chini Bagh," by which name the British Consulate General is locally known.

Our journey from Srinagar had occupied 49 days from Srinagar, including eight days' halts on the road. We could have done it easily enough in, say, forty-two, but we should not have enjoyed it nearly as much as we did. Including the value of stores consumed on the road, but not the wages and travelling allowances of private servants and Government orderlies, the cost according to the careful accounts I kept worked out at £120 for the three of us—much less than I had expected.

[Face p 54]



THE WALLS OF OLD KASHGAR

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CHAPTER V

KASHGAR

ONE'S first impression on arrival at the Consulate General is of greenery and shade; of limes and acacias, willows and planes and fruit-trees of all kinds; of tall bushy poplars rising like a wall against the sun, and slender poplars with little white-backed leaves which flutter silently in the faintest breeze like the waving of fairies' hands; of confused gardens on three different levels, with an orchard and a vine-pergola and a little meadow and a dense thicket of Babylonian willow and a pond with lotuses in it and a carved Chinese summer-house, all mixed up with trees and an amazing riot of flowers and vegetables. The house itself is comfortable enough, expecially after the long pilgrimage over mountain and desert which leads to it; the bedrooms are perhaps a little inadequate, according to English ideas at any rate, compared with the magnificent hall, dining-room and drawing-room, but the latter certainly impress Chinese and Russian visitors with the dignity of the British Empire. So does the imposing gateway flanked by a long line of clerks' quarters on one side and by the office buildings on the other. But the glory of the Consulate-General is undoubtedly the terrace along its north-western side. The approaches and south-eastern façade of the house afford no inkling of the view of which a first glimpse is obtained through the French windows of the drawing-room. Stepping out on to the long terrace with its sundial and parapet of sun-dried brick, you find yourself on the top of a low bluff looking out over the wide shallow valley of the Tümen River. Immediately below you 361 are the trees of the lower garden and its enclosing wall; then comes a narrow road-way with country people going to and from the busy town all day long; beyond it a patch of melon-beds and willow-fringed rice-fields, into which from the left juts a promontory of river-bluffs crowned with houses and

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

361 trees and at the very tip a small mud-built shrine. Then comes the winding river, brimming in summer with the melted snows of the Tien Shan. On the further bank more rice-fields and a line of loess bluffs, below which here and there nestle cottages and water-mills buried in willows; beyond, trees and farmsteads stretch away to the northern edge of the oasis five miles distant, where in stark contrast a great sweep of gravelly desert slopes down from the curiously-corrugated foothills of the Tien Shan.

What a joy that terrace was! The bedrooms all opened on it, or on a small verandah just above, in which I slept in all but the coldest weather. How pleasant it was, as one sipped one's early tea, to watch the sunlight flood the valley and listen to the various noises of the morning as they floated up from field and homestead, the harsher ones softened by distance; birds twittering, cocks crowing, women calling to one another, donkeys braying, boys singing, dogs barking, cart-wheels creaking and, on Wednesdays, the musical wailings of women worshippers at the little shrine of Sultan Buwam down by the river; best of all, that peculiar sound which for us seemed to hold the very essence of Kashgar's charm—the note of the millers' horns as they called to their customers to bring their grain for grinding. It is the horn of a mountain-goat that the miller of Kashgar winds for this purpose, and to us the gentle sounds which floated up in the morning from the little mills by the river were as the

Horns of Elf-land faintly blowing.

In the evening, too, the terrace was a favourite haunt, when the river-bluffs opposite glowed with the sun's last rays and pearly clouds floated over the far-off Tien Shan; when the patter of ponies' and donkeys' feet and the voices of the villagers riding home from market came up from the road beyond the garden, and the call to prayer echoed along the valley from the mosques of the city. But if the view from the terrace was wide, that from the roof of the tower was, or could be, immense. Perfectly clear weather is, alas, rare in Kashgaria owing to the fine loess dust which almost always slightly thickens the atmosphere; but at two seasons of the year, early summer and late autumn, the atmosphere in the mornings could be as clear as crystal and the farthest mountains plainly visible from the top of the tower. And what a panorama they made, in November at least when the leaves were off the trees which partially masked them! From south right round by west to north-east they stretched, the walls that screen Kashgar from the rest of Asia. To the north indeed the snowless outer ranges of the Tien Shan were not impressive, and higher peaks could only here and there be espied beyond. But right across the south-western horizon, sixty to a hundred miles away, stretched a mighty rampart of eternal snow, here irregular and serrated, there smooth-topped and broken only by the very highest massifs, which stood out like the marble bastions of a Citadel of the Gods. It was the Kashgar Range, a hundred miles long and from 18,000 to more than 25,000 feet high, which walls off the lofty table-land of the Pamirs from deserts and oases of the Tarim Basin.

It is difficult to analyse the fascination of lofty mountains seen afar off; so much depends upon their associations. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the climber thinks of the arêtes and chimneys and ice-slopes that await his scaling; the naturalist, the geologist and the surveyor of the new and varied world they offer, and the stalker of the mighty heads that surely lurk among their inmost sanctuaries. But to none do "the Hills" mean more than to Western dwellers in Eastern lands; and not only to those for whom they are a relief from the soul-destroying monotony of the plains, but also to all those who have heard the call of the Desert. To one who knows them both, the limitless freedom of desert horizons is the more exhilarating by contrast with the narrow paths of the mountains, while the springs and streams, the woods and flowers and grassy shoulders of the hills are the lovelier for the memory of arid wastes and empty sun-baked water-courses. So it was that for us, who knew so well the parched lands of Baluchistan and south-eastern Persia, much of the glamour of that distant line of snows lay in the promise they held of flowery meadows and deep glens full of greenery for our exploring, of "fresh woods and pastures new" tucked away among their crags and splintered ridges.

But the enchantment of the Kashgarian landscape is not solely of the kind that is lent by distance. The soil is of the curious formation known as "loess," which consists of nothing but fine desert dust, deposited from the air and firmly caked in layers of varying thickness. Loess has two peculiarities: one is its extraordinary fertility, which is such that you have only to poke a stick into the ground and water it regularly,

[134] and it will grow into a full-sized tree; the other is its tendency to vertical rather than horizontal cleavage. The result of the
312 first is that wherever water can be brought (the climate of the plains is almost rainless, but water from the encircling mountains
241 is plentiful for irrigation) the land is closely cultivated, willows and poplars line every water-channel and the farmsteads are buried in foliage. The second peculiarity results in the landscape being broken up most picturesquely in the neighbourhood of the many rivers by perpendicular cliffs or river-bluffs, seldom more than thirty or forty feet high, but bold of outline and of a rich yellowish hue, with farmsteads perched on top of them and mills nestling below, trees and crops growing to their very edge and greenery in every cranny.

The whole aspect of the better-watered parts of the oases is one of immemorial peace and contentment and of a civilization, such as it is, that has persisted unchanged for centuries. Nowhere could be found a more striking illustration of the strength and permanence of a rural population with its roots deep in the soil, especially when that soil can only be made productive by means of an elaborate system of irrigation.
175 Politically, Kashgaria has had as stormy a history as any country in the world. During the last 2,000 years or a little more the Chinese have conquered it five times, and four times they have been evicted from it. The total period of their occupations up to date only amounts to about 425 years; during the remainder of the time Kashgaria has been the prey of one conquering people after another. Huns, Yüehchih or Indo-Scythians, Hephthalites or White Huns, Tibetans, Uigur Turks, Qara Khitai,[1] Mongols under Chingiz Khan, Dzungar Mongols and Turkis from the Transcaspian Khanates have all won and lost it in turn. Apart from these more cataclysmic changes, civil war has at various periods raged between the
[241] larger towns, Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan and Aqsu. Yet down through the ages generation after generation of peasants have yearly tapped the summer floods from the mountains and have raised their crops of wheat and barley, rice and millet, cotton and maize and melons, while wave after wave of conquest has rolled over their head. Whenever any conqueror or tyrant has interfered overmuch with the cultivator, his greed has been his downfall. A striking recent example of this

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[1] The twelfth-century conquerors who gave their name to "Cathay." Stein, "Journal of the Royal Geographical Society," June, 1925, p. 495.

was in the case of Yakub Beg, the Khokandi adventurer who led a successful revolt against the Chinese in 1865 and ruled the country after the traditional manner of the Oriental despot for the next twelve years. Under his tyranny, according to Stein,[1] the population of some of the oases sank to one-half of what it had once been, and the cultivated area everywhere shrank greatly. The result was that when in 1877 the Chinese came back in force, they were welcomed with open arms by the people and the power of the self-styled "Amir" collapsed like a house of cards. /175

Nothing is more impressive than the persistence with which through the ages China has enforced her claim to Eastern Turkistan. Whether to safeguard the transcontinental "Silk Road," which in the palmy days of Imperial Rome carried the produce of her looms to the Atlantic shore, or whether because she must extend her effective occupation to the westernmost mountain barriers of her empire on pain of losing their protection, China has always returned to the charge, even after a thousand years. Despite the gigantic distances involved—for even now, with several hundred miles of railway to help, the journey from Peking to Kashgar takes five months—her armies have time after time pushed westward; the might of the Emperors of Cathay has leant up against the flimsy structures of one Central Asian power after another and has flattened them out as though they had never been. [489]

Since their last re-conquest in 1877 the Chinese have governed Sinkiang, the "New Dominion," from Urumchi fifty marches north-east of Kashgar. Standing on the site of Bishbaligh, one of the chief centres of the Uigur civilization in the Middle Ages, Urumchi commands the vital Kansu-Shensi corridor leading from Central Asia into the heart of Inner China. Cut off from the rest of China, except for this one long trail, by the vast extent of the Mongolian Desert, where a man may travel for fifty days without meeting a single human being, the New Dominion has recked little of the civil wars which during the last twelve years have rent the mother-country from end to end. The only effect on Sinkiang of the Revolution of 1911 and the consequent weakening of the Central Government has been to permit a Governor of outstanding ability to establish himself as the virtually independent ruler of Chinese Central Asia. The result of Yang Tseng-hsin's twelve years' rule has been that the military and other 636

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[1] "Journal of the Royal Geographical Society," June, 1925, p. 498.

636b brigands who infest Kansu, Szechwan and other western provinces are unknown in Sinkiang, which a European may traverse unescorted and unmolested from end to end. Conditions, indeed, vary in the different districts according to the energy and efficiency of the Magistrate of the time. Like crows round a corpse, thieves flock to a district to which an opium-smoker has been appointed, while they desert that of an energetic "Amban" as rats a sinking ship; but in general it may be said that life is safe everywhere and property as secure as in most European countries. Moreover, to Governor Yang and his subordinates must be given credit for what is probably a higher degree of prosperity and contentment than the country has known, at any rate since ancient times. They do not make the mistake of crippling agriculture by oppression and otherwise killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. They come of a race which has two thousand years of administrative experience behind it, and knows well how to base its power upon the strong rock of agricultural prosperity. Oppression exists, but it is chiefly by Turki minor officials, and the District Magistrate is usually there to appeal to in case of need. The predecessors of these same "Begs" were far more rapacious in the days of Yakub Beg, who was of the same class and type as themselves. Then, there was no appeal. Instances of serious and prolonged oppression by Chinese officials under the present régime are rare. A notable case in our time was that of General Ma Titai, the history of whose crimes and of the doom which avenged them [651] will be found in a later chapter. With the exception of land revenue, the taxation is almost entirely indirect; the incidence of the former is light, even taking into consideration the varying proportions over-collected by the Ambans for their own pockets; while the taxes on internal trade are farmed by Turki contractors who, like the Begs, dare not go too far in the [161] mulcting of their own fellow-countrymen. At any rate, the fact remains that the population is steadily increasing and every year more and more land is being taken into cultivation. 311 We saw the process going on in several of the districts we visited, 631 notably in Maralbashi, Posgam and Karakash.[1] District

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[1] Already the Merket subdivision of the Maralbashi district, two marches down-river from Yarkand, is too big to be administered effectively from Maralbashi, and there is talk of its being erected into a separate third-class district, just as was done a few years ago with Posgam when it was separated from Karghalik, a new bazaar built and a third-class magistrate installed.

Magistrates who succeed in bringing a certain area of new land 311
into cultivation—35,000 *mu* or about 6,000 acres, I believe— 631
receive a good mark at headquarters and are singled out for promotion. This results occasionally in money being wasted on canals along which the water will not run—"Amban's Follies" we used to call them—but it meant that ambitious Magistrates encourage the spread of cultivation in every way 651
and see that new settlers are left alone by the tax-gatherer. For three years a settler on new ground pays no revenue, and half-rates for the next three.

It is true that moral and intellectual progress does not 871
exist in Kashgaria. There are no schools except those attached to mosques, at which nothing is taught by the mullas but reading, writing and the Qur'an. By means of a strict censor- 208
ship not only are books and all written or printed matter dealing with current events kept from the hands of Chinese and Muhammadans alike, but the dissemination in writing of news or of any ideas whatever among the inhabitants is effectually prevented. All this, no doubt, is highly reprehensible from 178
the point of view of the democratic idealist. But after all, if the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the *summum bonum* for any community, as some people are still old-fashioned enough to believe, there is a good deal to be said for it. At any rate, in this twentieth-century world of hustle and the Yellow Press, of merciless competition and all-pervading publicity, one may be forgiven for hoping—selfishly, perhaps—that a corner of the earth may long be spared in which a peaceful, contented, simple, lovable and by no means uncivilized population exists without motor-cars or cinemas, without newspapers or telephones, without broadcasting or advertisements, without a mile of railway or even of metalled road, a land steeped in the Middle Ages, picturesque and quaint almost beyond belief—truly an Arcady of Cathay.

Of our life and work at Kashgar the part that D. and I 439
liked best was the touring, of which we had plenty. Though the trade between India and Chinese Turkistan is strictly limited by the great length and difficulty of the Leh route, the number of Indians connected with it who are permanently or temporarily resident in the oases of the Tarim Basin is surprising. At Yarkand alone there are usually between 100 and 150 Hindu traders, most of them representing firms in one or other of two Punjab towns, Amritsar and Hoshiarpur. Sindhi money-lenders from Shikarpur ply their trade at Yangi

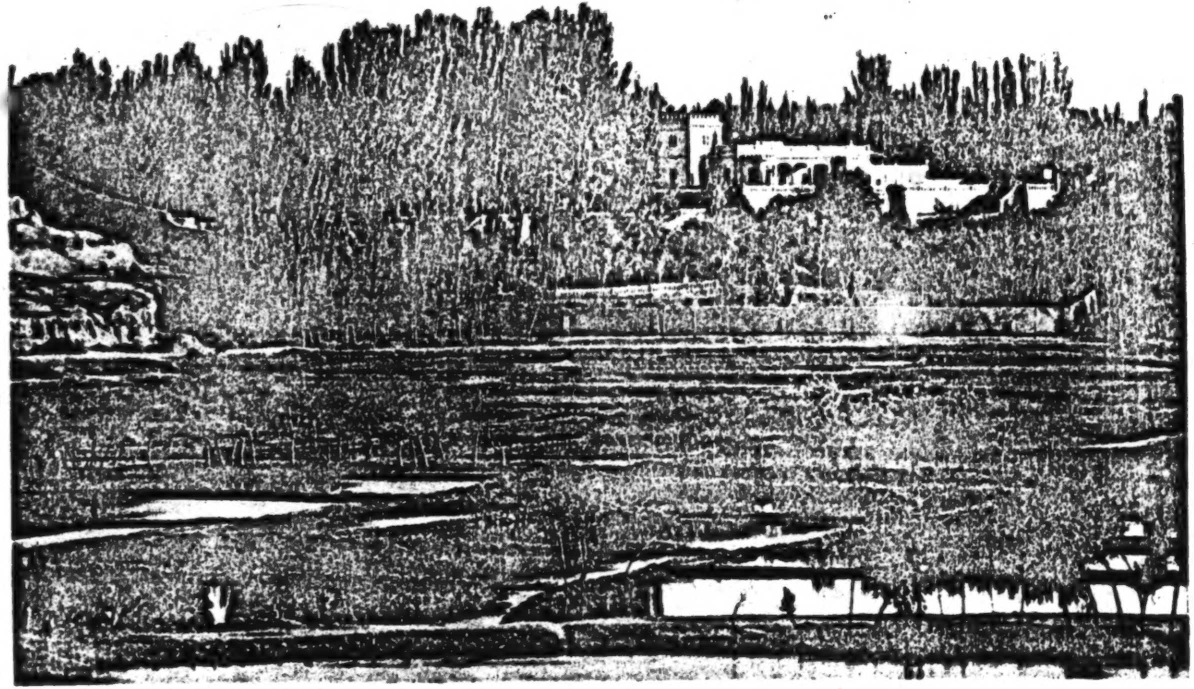
439 Hissar, Karghalik and elsewhere. Besides these there are colonies of Muhammadan British subjects in nearly all the districts, some of them purely agricultural immigrants from Northern Kashmir and Chitral, others (and these among the wealthiest in the land) merchants engaged in the Indian trade. Many of the latter have married Turki wives, own land and houses, and have a considerable stake in the country. 648 All these people cling tenaciously to their British nationality and their right to the protection of the Consular court, which 692 under the existing arrangement exercises extra-territorial jurisdiction over them. This is not the place to discuss the ins and outs of the extra-territorial system in general or the details of its application to Kashgaria. Suffice it to say that the Consul-General is kept very busy maintaining order among the British subjects of the various districts, settling their civil disputes, trying cases brought against them by Chinese subjects, helping them to obtain redress in the Chinese courts and generally watching over their interests. Although theoretically the Consul-General deals only with the Taoyin, the representative of the Governor of the province, in practice very few cases, and those only the most important ones of an "international" nature, are heard at Kashgar. The Consul-General works informally with the District Magistrates, either directly or through the British agents ("Aqsaqals") in the various towns. As the majority of the British subjects live from five to twenty marches from Kashgar, it can readily be understood that the most effective and expeditious method of dealing with their cases is regularly to visit the districts in which they reside and settle matters on the spot, either with the District Magistrates or among the British subjects themselves as the case may be. In fact, it was only by travelling once a year down each of the two main roads, Yarkand-Khotan-Keriya and Maralbashi-Aksu-Kucha, with halts varying from one to fifteen days at each district headquarters and with an occasional extra visit to the chief centre of the Indian trade, Yarkand, that I found it possible to keep in touch with the Indian colonies and (what is no less important) on friendly personal terms with the Chinese magistrates. 484 Nearly half of the two and a quarter years we were in Kashgaria was thus spent on tour, and D. and I covered, apart from holiday jaunts to the hills, some 3,400 miles, almost entirely on horseback with our baggage in Peking carts or on the back of pack-ponies. There was

3 [INDIAN MERCHANTS -- ANALYST]

no difficulty or hardship about any of these journeys among 484
the oases of the plains, for, apart from being looked after very well by our own people, we were not only assisted and escorted everywhere we went by the local authorities, but actually treated as guests, having frequently the utmost difficulty in getting payment accepted for the loads of flour, vegetables, rice, fruit, fodder for horses, etc., which met us at every town. Either the Chinese official rest-house or a private residence was placed at our disposal at most stages, though in the larger centres the Aqsaqal or some other influential British subject usually insisted on putting us up. Escorts were provided everywhere, whether we wanted them or not; the troops, at any rate down the Khotan road, were invariably turned out in our honour. Last but not least, at every town we visited except two or three in the remoter northern districts, the officials not only came out to meet us and to see us off with the peculiar roadside tea-drinkings which are *de rigueur* on these occasions, but also gave special dinner-parties in our honour. As will be seen later, these attentions were sometimes rather embarrassing than otherwise, but one could not help appreciating the goodwill that prompted them. Altogether, the friendliness and courtesy with which we were received practically everywhere by the Chinese authorities were most cheering, and testified eloquently to the popularity and respect gained for the British Consulate-General by its founder, Sir George Macartney, as a result of twenty-eight years of able and single-minded service.

Life at Kashgar itself was physically less strenuous than on tour, when work and long marches had to be combined, but I was always kept very busy, especially after I was deprived in July, 1923, of the valuable assistance of the Vice-Consul, Mr. Harding, whose post was afterwards left vacant. The 198
number of different languages in which we carried on our work indicates the variety and interest of our daily routine, On any one of our files there might be, and often were, papers in six different languages: English, Chinese, Turki, Persian, Urdu and Russian. As for the "spoken word," Turki, Urdu and Persian were all in regular use with visitors, litigants and witnesses during office hours. Some of the more cosmo- 000
politan of my friends, indeed, used all these three languages in the same conversation, switching from one to the other in a most disconcerting manner. The Consulate staff, whom I must now introduce, were as follows: the Mir Munshi (Head

[Face p 64]



BRITISH CONSULATE-GENERAL FROM NORTH BANK OF TÜMEN SU
(*Telephotograph*)

000 Clerk), Khan Sahib Muhammad Nasir Khan; the Accountant, Treasury Officer and Second Clerk all in one, M. Firoz ud Din; the Chinese "Writer," i.e. Secretary and Intrepreter, Mr. George Chu of Peking, late Intrepreter with the Chinese Labour Corps in France; and the Doctor, Khan Sahib Fazl-i-Ilahi. In spite of the conditions of exile under which they worked, two months' journey or more from their homes—for with the exception of the Doctor none of them had been able to bring their wives or families to Kashgar—they laboured uncomplainingly and loyally, and made things very easy for their chief.

For some years before our arrival there had been a platoon of Kashmir Imperial Service infantry under a native officer as Consular Escort, but this was "axed" in 1922 and replaced by eight mounted orderlies under a *jemadar*, recruited locally and armed with swords and revolvers. The pay and conditions of service being very good according to local ideas, we had the pick of the British subjects and some good Turki candidates to choose from, so that a really excellent set of men were got together. The best of them were Hafiz and Sangi Khan, who have already been introduced, and the Jemadar, a steady, nice, wise old Ladakhi called Ghulam Muhammad. These men, together with the *dakchis* or postal couriers and other Government employees and our private servants, all had quarters within the Consulate enclosure. Altogether our population was generally between seventy and eighty, including women and children; some of the men had other wives in the town, but nobody was allowed more than one within the precincts of the Consulate-General. In fact, we had a regular village on the premises, with its own gate and water-supply, each house enclosing a courtyard and some of them a tiny garden as well.

2020 Government officials who live at the end of telegraph and (worse) telephone wires, as nearly all do nowadays even in the remotest parts of the Empire, will envy the Consul-General at Kashgar when they hear that practically all his official telegrams take between 11 and 19 days to reach him. There certainly is a Chinese telegraph line between Peking and Kashgar viâ Urumchi, but messages usually arrive in such a mangled state after a week or more *en route* and several retransmissions, that it is seldom used for official correspondence, which comes through the nearest Indian telegraph station, Misgar. The Government of India maintains a service of couriers who bring the mails from Gilgit in 15–17 days and

202 the telegrams from Misgar in 11–13 days. Hunza men carry the bags on foot or horseback as far as Tashqurghan, Consulate couriers the rest of the distance. Except in early spring, when the mails are sometimes held up for a week or two by snow on the passes and the telegraph line over the Burzil is broken by the same agency, the service is remarkably regular. Accidents do happen, but are fortunately rare; in 1921 a Hunza courier with his mail-bag fell off the path near Ata'ābad and was dashed to pieces, and another was lost in the snow on the Mintaka Pass in the spring of 1923. Needless to say, these men are well paid, and the Kashgaris on the Tashqurghan section, who do the double journey by the Gez route once a month all the year round, have in addition comfortable married quarters in the Consulate "village," a coveted privilege.

205 Legation correspondence and other mails from China Proper, on the other hand, came by the Chinese post, which was regular and remarkably speedy, considering the vast distances involved. Letters took two months to reach Kashgar from Peking, and parcels (which came by cart) five to six months. Except for two private couriers whom we maintained for our heavy correspondence with Yarkand, we depended entirely on the Chinese post within the borders of Sinkiang. Our letters reached Keriya, for example, in ten days, though the distance is well over 400 miles, including 150 miles of sandy desert. The service between railhead at Pingtang and Keriya, viâ Kansu, Hami, Maralbashi and Yarkand, some 3,000 miles, is by far the longest courier-borne postal service in the world. Its efficiency is all the more creditable in view of the enormous difficulties with which the Department has to contend. The head of the Postal Department in Sinkiang during our time was an Italian and is always a European official of the Chinese Board of Communications; and the Chinese Postmasters whom we met at Kashgar were all men of up-to-date Western education with a good knowledge of English.

"Society" at Kashgar consisted of the Chinese official
647 world, the Swedish Mission, the Russian colony and the
British Consulate-General. The Chinese officials of whom
648 we saw most were the Taoyin, usually known by the honorific
title of Tao Tai; his Foreign Affairs Secretary, who spoke
English; the Magistrates of the Old and New Cities, which
are the headquarters of separate districts though only six
648 miles apart; the Commandant of the Old City garrison; the
Postmaster (another English-speaker), the Master of the Mint,

648 [797] and one or two others. The Swedish Church Mission has branches at both the old and the new towns, as well as at Yarkand and Yangi Hissar. They were short-handed during our time owing to the Russian road being closed and transit viâ India both difficult and expensive, and there were only three ladies and two men at the Old City Mission. We had some very good friends among the Swedes; most of them spoke English, and we came to regard them almost as our fellow-countrymen.

Before the Revolution of 1917 the Russians were very strongly represented at Kashgar. The Consul-General was usually a diplomat of high rank with an escort of a hundred Cossacks and a very considerable retinue. Owing to this and to the relative proximity of the Transcaspian centres of Russian culture, the Tsarist Consulate-General was the preponderating element in Kashgar society. By 1920, however, it had died a natural death and the Russian colony had dwindled to twenty-three, of whom seven were children. The former Trade Agreement between Russia and the Sinkiang Government having been abrogated in 1922 and no new agreement having yet been concluded with Moscow, the Soviet Government was entirely unrepresented in southern Sinkiang during our time, though this was by no means the case north of the Tien Shan.[1] Moreover, the whole Russo-Chinese frontier from the Pamirs to Aqsu was closed by the Chinese, who allowed no Russians of the new régime to enter Kashgaria, so that the surviving colony consisted almost entirely of pre-Revolution residents who either could not or would not return to their own country. Like the Chinese, hardly any of them spoke any language but their own, a fact which added considerably to the complications of official entertaining. Indeed, had it not been for two of the Russians, who spoke English and Turki respectively and acted as interpreters, intercourse would have been impossible, for neither D. nor I could speak a word of Russian.

600 In spite of the language difficulty, the official and foreign community met frequently and on the most friendly terms. We all "did our bit" in the matter of entertaining, including the chief Chinese officials, who were most hospitable, and keenly appreciated European hospitality in return, although it must have seemed strange and barbarous to them. Some

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[1] A Trade Agreement has since been concluded between the Soviet Union and the Governor of Sinkiang; and a Russian Consul (without escort) has been in residence at Kashgar since July 1925.

one of local importance, say one of the older Russian residents, would set the ball rolling with a Gargantuan feast to which every one was invited; thereupon the Tao Tai and the Hsieh Tai and the Mission and the Bank and ourselves, not to be outdone, would rapidly follow suit, each after the manner of our kind. Social life at Kashgar thus alternated between periods of comparative quiet and bursts of feverish gaiety. Among the most enjoyable parties were those given on behalf of the Chinese by one or other of the leading Turki merchants in their beautiful gardens outside the city. It may be explained that the modest term *bāgh* or garden in Central Asia includes not only what we would call the garden but the house or houses built on it; and very delightful places some of them are, with large airy rooms, quiet courtyards and deep high-roofed verandahs looking out on wildernesses of roses, pomegranates, vines, orchards and willow-fringed pools.

Apart from all this hospitality, there were frequent calls to be paid to or received from Chinese officials from the Tao Tai downwards, either visits of ceremony in connection with Chinese or British festivals, arrivals or departures of officials and so on, or interviews on business. These last, if knotty "international" points had to be discussed, might last an hour and a half or two hours, but three-quarters of an hour was the average duration of a Chinese call. Not speaking a word of Chinese—I was told that seven years was the shortest time in which I could hope to acquire enough of the language to be of use to me officially—I relied entirely on the services of an interpreter, either Mr. Chu, the Chinese Writer, or (while he was with us) Mr. Harding, a brilliant Chinese scholar. As I had found when I first went to Persia, the necessity of speaking through an interpreter is not altogether a drawback in diplomacy.

Another of my social duties was to exchange ceremonious calls twice a year with the British Aqsaqal and ten or twelve of the leading residents of the town. These latter included the chief Muhammadan religious and legal luminaries, the Yamen Begs and two or three of the wealthiest merchants engaged in the Russian trade. At Christmas they all came to pay their respects at the Consulate, and their calls had to be returned; at the 'Id festival it was my turn to call on them first. These visits were an education in old-world courtesy and dignified kindliness. Most of the old gentlemen were perfectly natural and had plenty to say for themselves, 000 so that there was nothing stilted about these functions. I was surprised to find that, though they all knew some Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, only one of my Turki friends spoke Persian. That tongue, however, was our regular means of communication with the British subjects of Chitrali or Afghan extraction, including some of the Aqsaqals.

We were not very much at headquarters in spring, summer and autumn, but when we were our spare time was fully occupied with rides and walks, tea-basket picnics, tennis with the Indian clerks on our excellent hard court, and so on. In winter there was skating on perfect ice from about 20th November to 10th February, as well as excellent duck- and snipe-shooting. My attempts to make a small practice-rink in the lower garden were not a success ; nothing would induce the water to remain under the ice as it formed. But there are many marsh-lakes throughout the Kashgar oasis which, as early as the middle of November, carry a foot or more of mirror-smooth black ice. The nearest of these natural rinks was six miles along the Aqsu road, and there was another one, much larger, among the marshes of Salarma five miles south-west of the New City. Two or three afternoons a week I rode out to one or other of these lakes, and often D. came with me or followed later with guns and the tea-basket. A couple of hours' exhilarating practice on the perfect ice would be followed by tea on a sunny bank, after which we would take our guns and an orderly to neighbouring haunts of duck and teal that we knew of, seldom returning empty-handed.

On days when there was not time to go out to the lakes
136 there was plenty of shooting close at hand. The Tümen Su, which flows past the Consulate-General, the Qizil Su two miles to the south, the Yaman Yar and other rivers, together with the innumerable springs along their banks, are frequented between October and March not only by the mallard and teal which breed in Kashgaria but by countless hosts of duck, geese and snipe of all kinds passing to and fro between the colder lands to the north and the lakes of Afghanistan, East Persia and North-western India. One day in November we counted no less than twenty-three gaggles of geese in the sky at the same moment, winging their way south-eastwards from beyond the Mountains of Heaven. A spring among the frozen rice-fields immediately below our garden wall was the haunt for weeks of several duck and a couple of snipe,

which were so confiding that we came to regard them as pets and spared them from the pot; but less than a mile away, under the eastern wall of the city, was a large area of rice-fields kept moist by slightly warm springs, where on good days one could rely on putting up twenty or thirty couple of snipe. As for duck, I counted no less than eight different quiet spots within two miles where we could be reasonably sure of a shot at any time of the day.

We had also our various hobbies. I spent hours puzzling out the results of my plane-tabling among the "Alps of Qungur" and elsewhere, and had also my enlarging apparatus (worked with an incandescent spirit lamp) with which I turned out many hundreds of pictures from my ever-increasing collection of negatives. The garden was D.'s chief joy and pride, but she also gathered the Consulate children round her two or three afternoons a week and taught them sewing, gardening, outdoor games and other accomplishments as well as such Girl-Guide and Wolf-Cub ideas as were appropriate in the circumstances. There was also a perfect menagerie of pets, useful or ornamental, to look after; these included at various times (and mostly at the same time) three cats, four snow-cock, three gazelles, fourteen hens, five ducks, a white pony about the size of a Shetland which I bought at Qizil Bazar for the equivalent of eighteen shillings, eight rabbits and a camel. The gazelles and the poultry all came to a tragic end at one time or another at the jaws of the semi-wild dogs which are such a pest in Kashgaria. These brutes hunt in packs at night when they are supposed to be guarding their masters' houses, and though I repulsed several of their attacks with my gun and killed some of them, they always came back, scrambling over the high walls of the garden with extraordinary agility. The loss of the poultry was particularly sad, for the cock, a magnficent bird of great size with all the colours of the rainbow in his plumage, had been picked up by us at a farm near Yarkand, while D. had brought back two beautiful hens three hundred miles or more from Khotan and Aqsu respectively. D. was breeding from these three birds and had raised two fine sets of chickens, when the dogs broke into their house and killed the whole lot one night. The feline members of the community were perhaps the most important of all; D. and I are both cat-lovers, and there is no doubt that the pussies ruled the Consulate. Their names reflected our polyglot habits at Kashgar, for the big tabby was "Chong Mao," the middle-

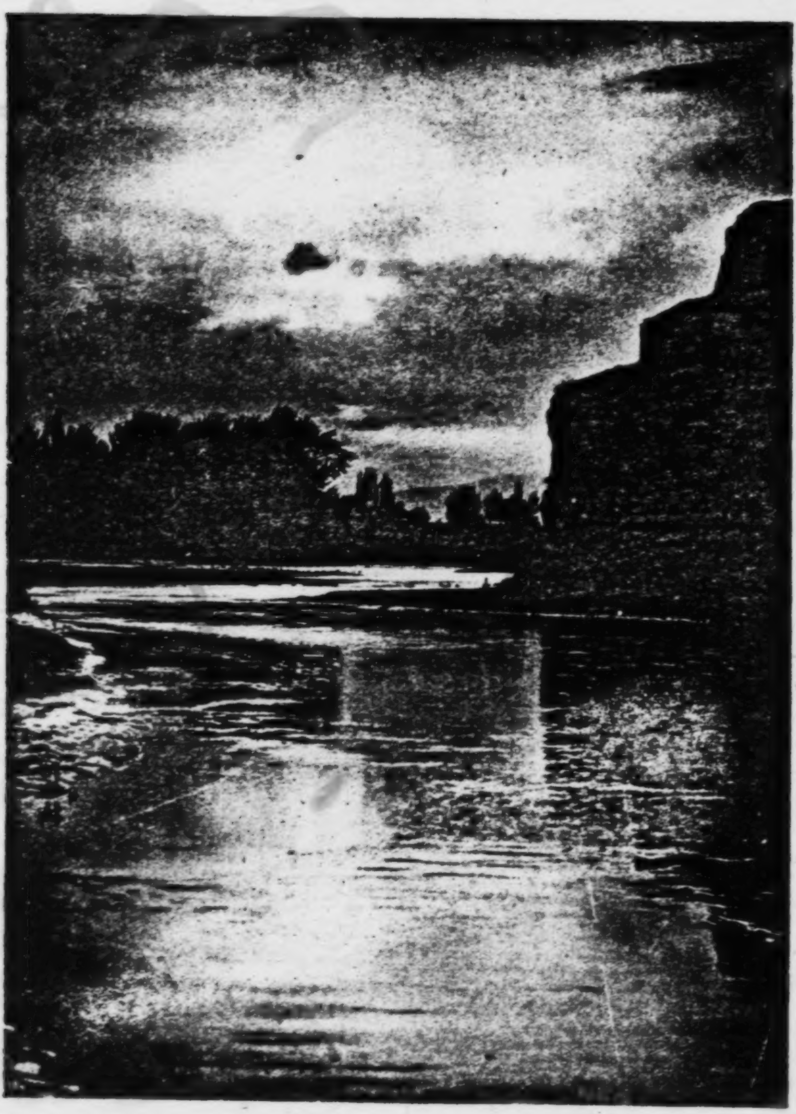
000 sized black "Chhota Mao," while the black kitten which was brought to the door by a poor Kashgar woman in the spring and speedily became first favourite was generally known as "Wee Squeakie." *Chong*, I may explain, is Turki for "big," *mao* Chinese for "cat," and *chhota* Hindustani for "small," so that four different languages (or five if you include Scotch) were represented in the nomenclature of the Consulate pussies.

They were happy days we spent at Chini Bagh, and only too quickly did they pass; hardly, it seemed, were we back from one tour before it was time to prepare for another. For halcyon days, halcyon weather is needed; and here the climate played its part right nobly. For those who love the sun and yet like a winter that *is* a winter, the climate of Kashgar approaches perfection. During the whole of our time
132 there was not a single day on which the sun did not shine, if only for an hour, and on four out of five it shone all the time. Not always with its full strength, indeed, because of the dust-haze already described; but it shone. The average rainfall throughout the year at Kashgar is about two inches. Between the beginning of March and the end of July showers and rain-storms are liable to occur, but there is always ample warning, so that they cause a minimum of inconvenience to lovers of *la vie au grand air*. The Turki farmer likes a drop or two of rain during the early summer, but it must not be overdone. Some years ago during a drought the inhabitants of Kashgar requested a certain popular mulla to pray for rain. He did so with great fervour, and shortly afterwards rain fell in torrents, ruining the crops. Whereupon, at the petition of the Kashgaris, the Amban punished the unfortunate mulla with a thousand stripes! I remember during the first rain we had at Kashgar being astonished to see out of the window the gardener hurrying indoors with the geraniums; on being questioned he explained that, as every one knew, rain-water was injurious to flowers and he was taking the geraniums in to save their lives. When it does rain, it is inadvisable to go out until the ground has dried, for the loess clay becomes so slippery with wet that it is almost impossible to keep one's footing. Owing to the extreme "continentality" of the climate—Chinese Turkistan lies further from the sea than any country in the world—the annual range of temperature averages 100° Fahrenheit; the lowest readings in January being in the neighbourhood of zero, while the highest shade temperature in August is 103°

to 105°. Another climatic feature arising from "continentality" is the fact that April is much hotter than October, which is the warmer month in other regions of the globe. 132

In winter the ground freezes to a depth of a foot and a half, and all irrigation water stops owing to the choking of the canals with ice between 15th November and the end of February. Yet the Kashgar winter is not at all a formidable affair. The skies indeed are sometimes grey with dust-haze, and for several days in January the thermometer does not rise above freezing-point. But the sun shines most of the time, while as for wind, that terror of cold lands, we had none worth mentioning. Ringed round on three sides by lofty ranges, Kashgar is mercifully windless in winter, so that in spite of the hard and prolonged frost the cold is not severe. We made ourselves very cosy in the evenings in front of roaring wood fires. One of the first things we did to the Consulate was to instal good British open fireplaces, not being content with the cheerless Russian stoves we found in the house: vast shiny black cylinders like the funnels of monstrous locomotives, which disfigured and either under- or over-heated every room. There are usually one or two light snowfalls during the winter, but the snow melts very quickly in the strong sun, except where there is underlying ice. In spring and early summer occasional storms with rain or dust or both vary the monotony of the eternal sunshine, and are also to be welcomed for the exquisite clearness of the air which follows them. At any time in July or August the weather may become, for short spells at a time, unpleasantly warm according to European though not to Indian standards; punkahs are unknown, though I must confess I should sometimes have been glad of one. But the nights are seldom oppressively hot, except occasionally just before a storm. Another fly—to use an appropriate metaphor—in the ointment of a Kashgar summer is the insect life. 136 Mosquitoes and sand-flies are a trial, though not to be compared with those of an Indian plains station; the former are smaller and less robust than those of Hindustan, and both can be effectively circumvented by a mixture of citronella oil and kerosene. At night muslin sand-fly curtains are advisable, unless one is sleeping in the open air and well away from walls.

One would have expected that the cities of Chinese Turkistan, where ideas regarding sanitation and hygiene are of the most primitive, would be hotbeds of disease and regularly 164 364



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EVENING ON THE TÜMEN SU ABOVE KASHGAR

[Face p. 72]

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364

swept by all sorts of epidemics. In particular it might be supposed that towns which are dependent for their water-supply upon small rivers, canals and even ponds would be peculiarly liable to the scourge of cholera, as are those of Eastern Persia and Afghanistan where similar conditions prevail. But it is a remarkable fact that cholera, typhus and plague are alike unknown, though they appear regularly in Ferghana and Bokhara immediately to the west. Stranger still, though dogs both tame and semi-wild abound, and though they occasionally go mad and bite people, hydrophobia is unheard of, though common enough on the Russian side of the Tien Shan. The only serious infectious diseases are typhoid and smallpox, which appear to be endemic ; in neither case, however, is the mortality rate high, in spite of the lack of western-trained doctors and hospitals, nor have Europeans much to fear from them. The only ailment which seems to give Europeans much trouble is a comparatively mild form of malaria which is prevalent in the districts where there is much rice-cultivation. On the whole, Kashgaria may be said to be one of the healthiest countries in Asia. So, at any rate, we found it, for with the exception of a single chill which kept D. in bed for a week or two our first September neither of us had a day's illness during the whole of our time in Chinese Turkistan.

CHAPTER VI

A CENTRAL ASIAN ARCADY

ON a clear May morning before breakfast at Kashgar it is pleasant to lean on the parapet of the flat roof of the Consulate and allow one's gaze to wander round the vast horizon of oasis and desert, of plains and snowy ranges. Beyond that horizon, north, south, east and west, it is easy to picture the sunlit spaces of High Asia stretching away round the dipping curve of the globe. How remote and isolated was the ancient land to which we had come! Sometimes I wondered whether railway or even metalled road would ever scale those lofty ramparts of ice, or bridge the immense gulf of desert between us and the Far East. Whose while would it be worth to spend the millions needed? There in the north, beyond the Mountains of Heaven, was the fair province of Semirechia, once richest of the Tsar's Central Asian lands and the home of many thousands of colonists from European Russia—a " white man's land " indeed. It looked at one time as if Kashgar was going to be made accessible from Europe through Semirechia more easily than by any other route; the Tsar's Government were pushing the Chimkend-Vyerni extension of their Transcaspian Railway rapidly eastwards towards the Dzungarian frontier, and southwards from Pishpek on this line they made a rough carriage-road by Fort Narin to the Tien Shan. They even, I believe, carried a *route carossable* over the Turug Art Pass, while from the Kashgar side they somehow or other—the Russian Consulate-General was very strong in those days—brought about the building of a fine bridge over the Tümen River just outside the Yarbagh Gate of the Old City. This bridge would have been convenient for visitors, armed or otherwise, who might have happened to approach Kashgar by the Narin Road. It was swept away by a summer flood some years ago, and curiously enough has not been rebuilt by the Chinese. Then there was

Ferghana to the west, an older land than Semirechia and no less fair. The Islamic culture of Kashgar comes from the ancient cities of Ferghana; its minstrels still sing of Marghilan, the Silver City, its ballads tell of the days when there were Khans in Khokand. The Russians before the War had brought their railway to Andijan, and for years the caravan-route over the Terek Pass from that town was the least arduous of the roads to Kashgar. Thus it is that such little foreign influence
177 as has left its mark upon this place is Russian. But in Central Asia the triumph of politics over nature is short-lived, and the trade between Kashgar and Russian Turkistan is a mere shadow of its former self. To the south of Ferghana lay the secluded mountain lands of Eastern Bokhara, another ancient Khanate. Time was when the Oxus and its affluent the Surkhab saw the caravans passing to and fro between Persia and Cathay; long before the Revolution, the organization by the Russian Government of the Andijan route had diverted traffic from the ancient Silk Road, but the glories of Bokhara and far Samarkand were household words in Kashgar none the less. Now the age-old Chinese policy of seclusion has once more prevailed, and the city of Tamerlane is as remote from Kashgar as Roum—Constantinople—itself. Then, to the south-west beyond the Pamirs, Afghanistan, now emerging from the shelter of her mountain walls into the dusty arena of the twentieth century; then the "Rough Bounds," as they would call them in the Highlands, of Dardistan and Baltistan across which we came; and last Tibet, the true Roof of the World, still remote and mysterious in spite of the long but narrow searchlight-beam of publicity which has lately fallen upon it.

Ignorance in Kashgaria of the outside world is still profound. Strangers, especially "Afghans," under which generic term Indians, Persians and Bokharans as well as genuine Afghans are grouped, are called "travellers" (*musafir*), or "men who have crossed the passes" (*davan-ashti*), for the road to Leh and India is often referred to as the "Seven Passes." What little knowledge there is of India and its English protectors is confined to Kashgar, Yarkand and the oases of the south; along the north-east road, in Maralbashi, Aqsu, Kucha, etc., the vaguest ideas prevail. Nor do their Chinese rulers enlighten the inhabitants; quite the reverse. Some of those we met had very hazy ideas themselves as to what was "beyond the passes." Harding told me that they visualized India, if at all, as a mountainous frontier province of "England," inhabited entirely by turban-heads (Chan-t'ou) over whom ruled a white race only slightly less barbarous than themselves. I remember once being told by an inspecting officer from Urumchi who called on me about the road across the Gobi Desert to China Proper: "It is not so dangerous as it used to be," he said, perfectly seriously. "The route the caravans used to go by between Hami and Tunhwang became infested by stone dragons, which breathed fire and storm and devoured many travellers. They got so bad, that the government sent out a detachment of troops against them. But the stone dragons devoured the troops too. So the route had to be declared closed and now travellers go by a longer one where there are no stone dragons." Another Magistrate with whom I was talking about the elusive "cloudy tiger" of the Tarim River jungles was very contemptuous about this animal, which he admitted he had never seen. "It is like the Turban-head, mild and cowardly," he said. "The real Chinese tiger is a very different animal. It is twice as big as the Maralbashi tiger, and it bears on its forehead the royal symbol, Wang. Wherever it goes, a strong wind follows it. Thus is it recognized."[1] 177 825

Every now and again some sight or incident would bring forcibly home to me the Arcadian isolation in which the people of the country lived. One day while walking near the Aqsu Gate I came upon a small crowd lining the bank above one of he few short pieces of level road near the city. Wondering what hey were looking at, I joined them and saw—a young man igorously pedalling a bicycle up and down. The crowd gazed n awed silence. I got into conversation with a man who told ne that this "velocipede" was the only one in Kashgar and hat its owner occasionally gave exhibitions. He did not think hat anyone else in Kashgar knew how to ride a velocipede. 177

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[1] So tall were some of the yarns with which I was solemnly regaled y dear old mandarins, that had it not been for the fact that they bviously believed every word they said I would have taken it for ranted that they were trying to pull my leg. One, who evidently hought I had never seen a yak, told me some remarkable facts about hat animal. He said that a yak will dig his horn into the mountain-ide and thus swing his body across a steep face, using his horn as a ivot. More wonderful still, when a loaded yak comes to a corner in narrow cliff-path where a rock juts out and prevents his getting is load round in the ordinary way, he turns inward, facing the cliff, nd *sidles* round the corner with his hind legs over the edge!

In some ways the Tarim Basin is more than old-fashioned—it is mediæval. I remember reading the late Elroy Flecker's play "Hassan" and being charmed with its poetry, but a little superior about the romantic glamour which it evidently had for London audiences—the Golden Road to Samarkand, and so on.

"Samarkand's nothing," I wrote in a letter home. "Here at Kashgar we are twice as far beyond Samarkand as Samarkand is far from London. After all, the city of Tamerlane is directly connected with Charing Cross by steamship and railway, whereas if you want to come to Kashgar you must undertake a real caravan-journey, and a long one too. Even before the days of railways and steamships the caravan journey from Baghdad to Samarkand was not half as long as that from China Proper to this place by Shensi, Tunhwang and Keriya, which is still used occasionally by camel caravans bringing Chinese tea and silks. Then there is the still longer, though cooler, north road across the Mongolian steppes, along which an old Chinese carrier came the other day. He left railhead with his camels last September and turned up smiling in June, talking of his nine months' journey as if it had been a week-end trip. He told me that he had marched for fifty days once without seeing a human being. . . .

"About Baghdad, too, it is a little difficult to enthuse if you have been there. Constantinople, yes; but not Baghdad. Anyway, in twentieth-century Yarkand we can match the characters in 'Hassan'
735 and the things they did in eighth-century Baghdad. Take the Chief of the Beggars, for example. The Beggars, or *Qalandars*, are a guild
[575] recognized by the authorities with their *Shangia* or Chief, just as in old Baghdad, and the Chief of the Beggars is one of the wealthiest men in Yarkand. This is because he and his men are in close alliance
548 with the *Shangia* of the *Pashraps* or Chief of Police (a Turki subordinate official) and *his* men. The two Chiefs co-operate in the organization of burglaries and thefts, sharing the spoil. Practically everything that is stolen in Yarkand comes eventually into the hands of one or other of these two men. Since the Chinese made opium contraband a few years ago, too, they have reaped a rich harvest out of the illicit trade in that drug between Afghanistan and Yarkand.

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733 [1] The result of the Governor of Sinkiang's prohibition of opium cultivation and importation has been instructive. Until it became
276 contraband, the consumption of opium in southern Sinkiang was comparatively small and prices were low; but once the import from Afghanistan and Semirechia was prohibited, the price went up and it became "the thing" not only to smoke but to smuggle it. There came to be big money in the business, and this, together with the excitements of opium-running among the wild mountains of the Sino-Afghan frontier, attracted the most adventurous spirits in the country. The Urumchi Government and the more efficient of the District Magistrates do their best to stop the smuggling, which is only as profitable as it is because there is absolutely no cultivation of the poppy in Sinkiang, a fact to which the Goverment point with justifiable pride;

“This is how they work. As every one who is acquainted with 548 Muhammadan countries knows, it is a *sawāb* or merit-acquiring action o give alms to any beggar, whether he deserves it or not. Consequently the fraternity flourish even as the green bay tree; also, they ear all that is going on. They therefore make admirable spies and llies for the police. Suppose, then, that an opium-running convoy rom Afghanistan is reported by the beggars to be approaching Yarknd. The smugglers always break up into parties of two or three mong the foothills above the city and endeavour to enter with their oads by night. The Chief of Police then calls the Chief of the Beggars o his garden outside the city and the two of them concoct a plan of ampaign something like this: on the nights when the smugglers are xpected the Chief of the Beggars will post parties of his men near he most likely of the many holes in the city walls, with orders to ntercept any smugglers they can get hold of and drag them off to the arden of the Chief of Police; the *pashraps* or watchmen are to patrol he streets and environs of the town and do likewise. When the ime comes the two Chiefs await the result at the appointed place and ivide the spoil, which usually consists of heavy blackmail in kind aken from the captured smugglers.

“Think of the dramas that must be enacted at a place like Yarkand! here must be enough in one year to make plots for a score of ‘Hasans.’ Everything is there, from the comic rivalry between the Chief f Police and the Captain of the Military, who is represented by the ungling or (Chinese) commandant of the garrison with his locally-ecruited soldiers, to the tyrant Harun-ar-Rashid and his torture-hamber. General Ma, Titai of Kashgaria, with the big hay-chopper ith which he slices men's limbs off joint by joint, would play the atter to the life.”

The oases of the Tarim Basin are a land flowing with milk nd, if not honey, almost everything else. D. has a vivid and y no means overdrawn picture of the Kashgar bazaars in ne of her letters home.

“In the autumn the bazaars, always well supplied, positively 443 verflow with things to eat. Millers sit in their shops behind mountains f flour, next door to them grain-merchants squat surrounded by uge sacks of golden corn-cobs, rice, wheat and millet. The vegetable 511 talls are weighed down with enormous onions, lettuces, cabbages, undles of spinach and strange local vegetables which are new to us. ven the tinsmiths, the cloth-merchants, the cap-sellers have fruit nd vegetables to sell, and at every corner sits some one with baskets f peaches, melons, pomegranates and grapes. Luscious nectarines ll off the stalls and the street-boys do not even trouble to pick them p. Horses and donkeys snatch at bundles of hay or dried lucerne

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ut the extreme difficulty of the frontier, and the countless secret 276 aths by which determined men riding ponies like mountain goats can 733 nport the drug, make the prevention of smuggling an impossible sk. Also there is the co-operation between the two “Hassan” haracters described above.

443 as they pass, and nobody minds, for the loss of one or two bundles matters little among so many. In this country everybody seems to 511 be eating all the time. Not only in the town but for miles along the roads leading to it there are wayside food-pedlars every hundred yards, the very poorest of whom has a few handfuls of nuts, slices of melon, and a pomegranate or two to sell; the grander ones have booths or large barrows shaded by umbrella-like canopies of matting and piled up with strange sloppy white sweetmeats and 'mantas,' which are made of minced meat enclosed in thin cases of dough, as well as with the usual melons, peaches and other fruit. No wonder that the Kashgaris are a fat and cheerful race."

465 The cost of living for Europeans at Kashgar is lower even than it was in India thirty years ago. Wages are absurdly low. The only one of our servants who drew a comparatively high wage was Ahmad Bakhsh, who received 60 rupees (£4) a month because he was an Indian and in exile. Our excellent cook, Daud Akhun, drew 10 taels or £1 6s. 8d.—and other servants in proportion down to honest, smiling Salih Akhun, who did third gardener, kitchen assistant and odd-job man, for the princely sum of 16s. a month. Salih Akhun's manners were delightful; whenever he saw you a grin spread over his rugged face and his right arm moved like clockwork across his 571 lower front in the Turki salute. As for food, here are some of 435 the average prices D. paid in the course of her daily housekeeping:

262 Meat (excellent mutton every day, beef Thursdays only), 2*d.* per lb.; ox or yak tongues, 8*d.*; kidneys, 5 for 2*d.*
Eggs, 2*d.* a dozen.
Chickens, 4*d.* to 6*d.* according to size; large fat ducks, 8*d.*
Milk, 1*d.* per pint; cream, 8*d.*, from which we made our own butter.
Wheat flour (poor quality), ½*d.* per lb., rice ditto.
Cabbages, 1*d.* each, spinach 1*d.* per lb., potatoes and tomatoes, 2*d.* per lb.
Apricots, in season, per basket of about 3 lb., 1¾*d.*; peaches and nectarines, 2*d.*; grapes, 3*d.*
Dried fruits (apricots, peaches, raisins), 1*d.* per lb.
Game in season: pheasants and wild duck, 6*d.*; teal and partridge, 4*d.*; snow-cock (twice as big as a pheasant), 1*s.* 4*d.*

262 Fresh fish was an item which often appeared on D.'s menus, the best kind being the *asman-belek* or "heaven-fish," which is very much the same as the "mahseer" of India, and is found in both the rivers which flow past Kashgar, the Qizil Su and

262 the Tümen Su. D. never bought it in the bazaar, but arranged with a particular fisherman to bring along his morning catch now and again. She paid him *4d.* a pound for it, straight from the river. In winter the Chinese get frozen fish by post from Ili in the north, and this is regarded as a great delicacy; it is a kind of sturgeon, which if thawed gradually is quite eatable. But we much preferred fresh "heaven-fish." There is a theory among the Europeans of Kashgar that the local fish is dangerous to eat, on account of a poisonous gland or something of the kind; this seemed to us to be a myth, for neither we nor our guests ever felt the 226 slightest ill-effects from it. We went out one morning with our friend the fisherman and his mate to study their methods. At 7 a.m. they called for us at the Consulate with their paraphernalia, which consisted of a large bag-shaped net on a triangular frame attached to a pole carried by one man, and a long stick carried by the other. Arrived at the canal (the Qizil Su in which they usually fished was rather a long walk from the Consulate, so the men said they would try the mill-canals of the Tümen Su) the man with the net entered the water and submerged the net, facing upstream; his mate waded in about fifty yards above and began beating the water with his pole, gradually working down, in order to drive any fish there were into the net. When he had finished the beat the other man lifted the net out of the water to see if there were any fish in it. We watched them do this at several different points, but we evidently brought them no luck, for not one did they catch. In the Kizil Su they used to get quite big fish, eight or ten pounds.

244 The king of Kashgar fruits is undoubtedly the melon known as the Beshak Shirin. It is indeed a super-melon. We used to think in Baluchistan that the melons were good, and at Kerman too I used to get fine ones by the donkey-load as presents from Persian friends. But the best of Persia and Baluchistan were only as the inferior kinds grown at Kashgar. The Beshak Shirin is shaped like the Cantelupe, and is yellow with green markings; it is on an average twice as big as any Cantelupe one sees in London shops, and when ripe its skin is so thin that its juice oozes out on to the dish. Its flesh, white or pale yellow, you can eat right down to the skin and its flavour is ambrosial. We weighed and measured a fairly good specimen from our own garden—by no means the biggest I have seen; its circumference was 33 inches and its weight

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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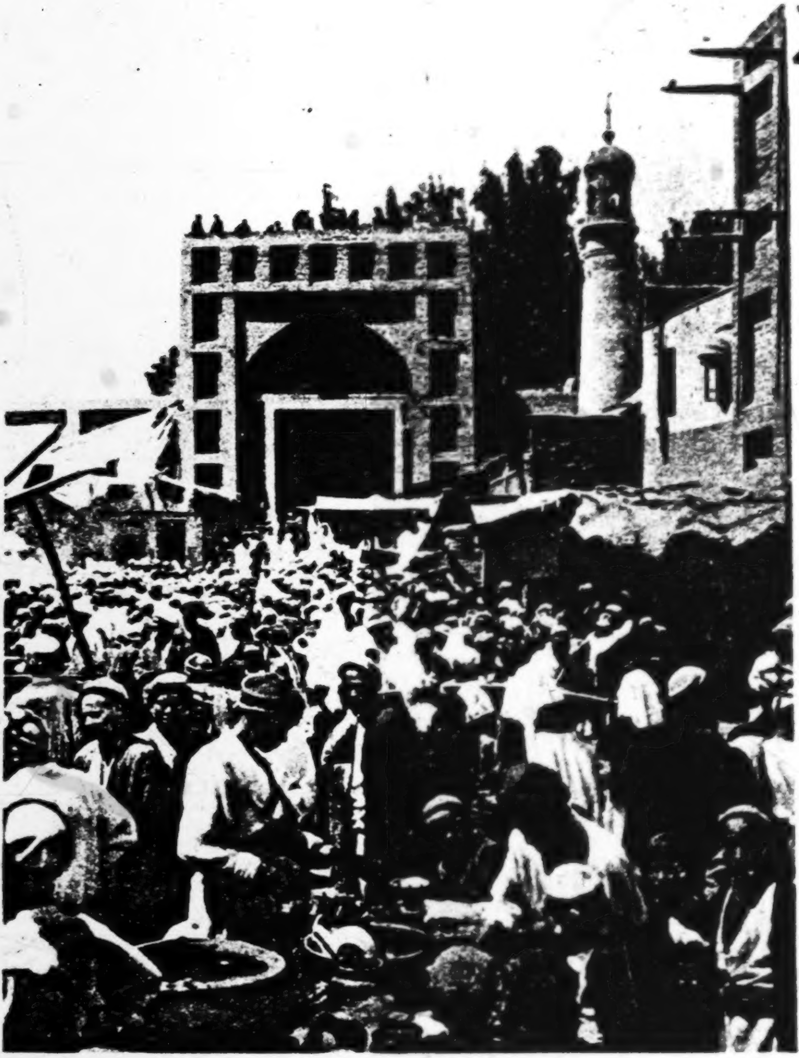


KASHGAR ON BAZAR-DAY [Face p.80]

244 17½ lb. During the lamentably short season of about three
weeks in August-September a Beshak of this size costs 3*d.* in
the bazaar. Melons like a slightly salt soil, but must have a
great deal of water; when we were making an orchard out of
the lower garden, which had been under useless and insect-
harbouring Babylonian willow, we first sowed melons in order
to take the salt out of the soil, and the crop we obtained was a
magnificent one. The Beshak Shirin of Kashgar is of the
same kind, and probably just as good, as the famous melons
of Hami in the extreme east of the province. The latter used
431 to be sent as presents to the Emperor in classical times, as
any educated Chinamen will tell you. As the distance is
2,000 miles by road, and as the Beshak is a delicate melon
and quickly goes bad, I often wondered how they did it; and
I once questioned a Chinese official who had been posted at
[251] Hami on the subject. He told me that the reason why Hami
melons are so much prized is because they retain their flavour
even when dried. There is, or was, a regular trade in dried
melons between Hami and China Proper. Presents of fresh
melons were, however, sent to the Emperors of the late Ching
Dynasty every year by special camel caravan across the
Mongolian Desert. Ten times as many as the number intended
for presentation used to be sent, each packed in a box
separately with cotton wool, as only about ten per cent. of
those sent used to be fit for the Emperor's table when they
arrived.

244 We grew all our own vegetables in the garden, of which D. was in charge, except potatoes, which were good and cheap in the bazaar and took up too much room in the garden. Beginning with spinach in March we were well supplied throughout the season with asparagus, green peas, cabbages, red tomatoes, French beans, cauliflowers and Brussels sprouts. D. also introduced broad beans, yellow "Golden Queen" tomatoes and *brinjal* or egg-plant (the French *aubergine*) from India; all did very well and were greatly appreciated by our Chinese guests.

251 As we had no greenhouses, owing to the prohibitive cost of glass, it was necessary to store vegetables throughout the winter by burying them in deep pits. Owing to the intense dryness it was possible to do this without first drying the vegetables, and we thus got cabbages, cauliflowers and Brussels sprouts fresh daily right through till March, when the spinach (sown the previous autumn) was ready. The mouths of the

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

251 pits were filled up with a layer three feet thick of branches, matting, straw and leaves, a small hole closed with straw only being left for the gardener to get in and out by.

245 With regard to fruit, nearly everything that is found in a south of England garden grew well in our garden; most of the fruit indeed ripened too quickly so that there was a good deal of waste. We used to get two crops of green figs, but the trees had to be well covered up in winter to protect them from the frost. Grapes also grew wonderfully, the base of the vine-stem being similarly covered up in winter. Strawberries (known locally as "Russian mulberries") grew in profusion, but never became very sweet or large because they ripened too quickly. Apples and pears were poor, for lack of good European varieties, but peaches, nectarines, black mulberries, greengages and damsons were all as good as could be; the greengages, indeed, were almost too sweet. And yet our orchard was not a good one, compared for instance with those of the chief Andijani merchants. Besides all the above, they grew magnificent cherries, quinces and pomegranates, none of which were good in our garden. Among flowers, most annuals did very well, and roses too if the bushes were carefully buried in winter. D. started a most successful rose-garden with several varieties imported from India.

574 I have already mentioned the frequency with which we were entertained by the hospitable Chinese officials. This was particularly the case when Chu Tao Tai, as he was generally called, was Taoyin or Prefect of Kashgaria. From the social point of view, apart from everything else, it was a great blow to us when after a long term of office at Kashgar this universally-respected official was transferred to Yarkand in the autumn of 1922. Beaming all over with humour and good-will, he was one of the best hosts I have ever seen, and we always looked forward to his parties. He got over the language difficulty at the more polyglot meals by the simple method of seating all the guests of one nationality together, so that there was always a subdued hum of conversation, if no more; besides which he himself was always an interesting and interested talker and kept the available interpreters fully occupied. What appealed to us most, however, was his consideration for his foreign guests' likes and dislikes. He had evidently made a special study of European tastes and manners, and as far as possible he tempered the wind of Chinese hospitality to the shorn Western lamb.

574 Our first dinner-party at the Taoyin's Yamen was a memorable affair. To begin with, our kind host insisted on sending round for us his landau and pair of spirited Russian bays. In we climbed at the Consulate gate, off went two of our uniformed orderlies and four Chinese troopers in front and next moment we were galloping through our outer gate and down the narrow, uneven lane leading to the Yarbagh Gate at a most alarming rate, hotly pursued by our other orderlies on their horses and more yelling Chinese cavalrymen. Arrived at the city gate I thought we would slacken speed through the crowded streets, but not a bit of it; on we tore, grazing fruit-stalls and missing street-corners by inches, the outriders clearing a lane for us with shouts and yells, until we came to an unimposing mud gateway above which towered a tall mast with a curious kind of crow's nest half-way up it. Above hung the five-coloured flag of the Chinese Republic—yellow for the Chinese themselves, red for the Mongols, black for the Manchus, white for the Mussulmans and blue for the Tibetans. As we alighted and entered the Yamen precincts a primitive fife-and-drum band struck up from a gallery on our left, and we were further startled a moment later by loud shouts of *Pao!* (salute) from our escort, followed by three deafening bangs. A moment later we found ourselves walking past a row of Chinese soldiers in baggy blue uniforms presenting arms with antiquated-looking rifles, and a black-clad Chinese major-domo was bowing before us with our own huge red visiting-cards—sent on ahead for the purpose—clasped in both hands. White-bearded Turki Begs in long cloaks conducted us through an inner gate into a beautiful garden full of every kind of flower and fruit and containing three large ponds covered with pink-blossomed lotus. In the middle was a raised platform with a pagoda roof over it and white-clothed tables spread with fruit and sweets; beyond it, a long single-storied pavilion of painted wood, one end of which with its verandah overhung one of the lotus-ponds like the broad stern of a houseboat. Our genial host and his "Foreign Secretary" met us near the gate with many polite Chinese speeches and hand-shakes both Chinese and English, and led us to the summer-house where we found gathered most of the other guests, including the leading Chinese officials and representatives of the Swedish and Russian communities. It was now three o'clock and we had not lunched, so that we were glad to keep up our strength with tea and fruit at intervals throughout the hour and a half which

followed, during which we all sat talking in the pavilion or 574 walked about the garden admiring the lotuses. Dinner when it came at last was served in the houseboat-like pavilion, the interior of which consisted of one long, airy dining-room tastefully decorated with flowers in pots and Chinese paintings.

The Taoyin, as I have said, was always merciful to his 264 European friends, and the dinner was much shorter than the average Chinese repast. There were only some twenty-five courses, and these were eaten with the full complement of knives, forks and spoons; not a chop-stick to be seen, though I, for one, as soon as I had learnt the knack of using them, always used chop-sticks on the exotic Chinese food rather than banal Western cutlery. It may be of interest to record the 262 menu, so far as I was able to identify the courses. Hors d'œuvres including, in addition to the usual items, slices of hard-boiled egg which had been buried for some years and had turned quite green, were eaten during as well as before the meal.

MENU

Tea and Dessert
Hors d'œuvres
Syrup dumplings
Shark's fin with shredded chicken
Pigeon's eggs
Pork fritters
Traveller-fish soup
Bamboo-root stewed in syrup
Roast chicken
Mince dumplings
Dried Chuguchak sturgeon
Sea-slug soup
Tinned oranges
Stewed chestnuts
Cold roast pork
Veal fritters
Fish tripe
Cabbage soup
Stewed pears stuffed with rice
Pastry dumplings
Baked mutton
Roast pigeon
Mutton fat fritters
Seaweed soup
Lotus seeds in syrup
Boiled rice
Tea and dessert

The Taoyin's chef was a master, and many of the above dishes were excellent, both European and Chinese; but I

262 must confess that the three or four favourite Chinese *plats* leave me cold. Shark's fin consists of a tangle of absolutely tasteless pieces of white elastic, stewed with shreds of chicken; sea-slugs are dark grey gelatinous substances with an unpleasant dead sort of flavour, swimming in a salty gravy; bamboo-root in slices has a nutty flavour and is not so bad, but very indigestible; another delicacy which is, I believe, a kind of seaweed tastes of—well, of seaweed. I can quite believe that all these things have a quite different flavour when fresh, especially the marine products which seem to appeal particularly to the Chinese; the trouble is that in Sinkiang, five months' journey from the coast, they can only be obtained in the dried form, and yet the Chinese like or pretend to like them better than the best-cooked fresh local products. The fact is, I suppose, that the exiled Chinaman has the palate of faith and to him even a dried sea-slug tastes of home.

What was almost always a trial at Yamen banquets was
574 the drink. Except on great occasions when one or two bottles
273 of a sticky brand of French champagne were produced and administered in small quantities, there was nothing to drink but a peculiarly evil-smelling kind of brandy. One was seldom pressed to eat, for which one was thankful enough, but it was impossible to avoid at least sipping the brandy between every course. A Chinese host talks much more about his cellar than about his cook; to refuse to drink with him
574 means that you do not like his wine, an imputation which causes him much loss of face. Apart from the conventional
524 politenesses, which one soon learns to give and take as a matter of course, there is nothing stilted or ceremonious about Chinese conviviality, even on official occasions. The etiquette seems to be for a guest to behave as if he were in his own home, lolling about on his chair, getting up from table in the middle of dinner and walking about for a few minutes, and so on. When conversation flagged at our own parties it was generally safe to start the Chinese off on a kind of "fingers-out" game which was very popular. In this, two players put out their right hands at the same time, either closed or with one or more fingers outstretched, at the same time shouting a number which they guess will be the total number of fingers out for both hands. Whenever one of the players shouts the correct number, he makes the other drink his health. The fingers go out and the numbers are shouted with amazing rapidity, and when three or four such contests are going on at the same time

the effect on the gaiety, or at any rate noisiness, of the party and on the circulation of the liquor is remarkable.

The manners and customs of the table-servants were a never-failing source of delight to D. and myself. I have mentioned in a former chapter the staid Chinese butler at Yangi Hissar who clapped his master's bowler on top of his own Homburg and stood solemnly wearing the two hats throughout the tea-party. Often at dinner-parties in the open, when we had left the table and were sitting over tea and dessert in another part of the garden, I noticed the waiters going round the table and pouring back into the bottle any champagne or brandy left by the diners in their glasses. After one of our own dinners on the terrace, I happened to go back suddenly to the table to fetch something and found two attendants who had come with Chinese guests similarly occupied—but it was not into my bottles that they were pouring the remains of the drinks. At a certain ladies' dinner-party at Khotan D. was electrified to observe one of the waiters take away a guests' cup, drink off the cold remains of the tea and, without washing it, fill it up from the tea-pot and hand it back to its owner. After that, she said, she took care to drain her cup to the dregs every time!

Harding and I (D. fortunately was not invited) attended during our first week in Kashgar another meal which was very different from the civilized banquet described above. This was a lunch given by General Ma, Titai (G.O.C.) of Kashgaria, one of the worst scoundrels in Central Asia. This person was a 661
Muhammadan of Yunnan province, aged over seventy yet full of vitality, who had held the chief military command south of the Tien Shan for seven or eight years and had taken advantage of his position to enrich and aggrandize himself by the most brutal and oppressive methods. He made everybody call him *Padshah* (king) on pain of death; he had a whole harem full of the prettiest Turki women in Kashgar, and his armed agents roamed the country-side "looking for new cows to milk," as the Titai facetiously put it. The only person in Kashgaria of whom he was afraid was Chu Tao Tai, and after the latter's transfer his extortions quadrupled. He had a pleasant way of trumping up charges against people whom he did not like, or who refused to pay him the blackmail he demanded, and cutting off their fingers or toes, joint by joint, in an immense hay-chopper he had constructed specially for the purpose. In fact, he emulated the exploits of the worst robber-Tuchuns of China Proper, the only difference being

661 that his army was mostly on paper and he had no real strength behind him.

Ma Titai's headquarters were at the New or Chinese city,
574 six miles east of Old Kashgar, and here he kept up great state. Harding and I looked forward with much interest to seeing this ogre; nor were we disappointed, for there was something distinctly ogre-ish about our experiences. Half an hour's ride from the Consulate brought us within sight of the long massive walls of the Titai's citadel. Here we were met by a troop of well-mounted but untidy and apparently only quarter-disciplined Chinese cavalry, who escorted us in a thick cloud of dust through dirty, tumbledown bazaars thronged by a sinister-looking half-breed populace to a huge mud-brick gateway of the *lasciate ogni speranza* type. Here the smell which rose from the dry moat below nearly knocked us off our horses. Within, more gateways, skew-eyed like the first to keep out the devils (in China the devils can only fly straight, so a gateway with a kink in it defeats them) followed by a long street of shops rather more prosperous-looking than those outside. Here and there we had peeps up side-lanes of fantastically-shaped temples and other buildings, some half-ruined, others grotesquely painted and surmounted by symbolical wooden figures of birds and beasts.
[344] At last we came to the Titai's *yamen* or palace and found ourselves in a vast square with a pagoda-roofed gateway in front of us and enormous figures of dragons on either side. Troops of soldiers dashed about presenting arms as they ran and fell hurriedly into line with much shouting of words of command, while the salute-guns banged their welcome and horses shied in all directions. Passing through huge painted doors we were welcomed in an inner courtyard by a short, grizzled, monkey-like old man with a long wispy moustache and fierce eyes, resplendently arrayed in a saxe-blue Chinese Field Marshal's uniform several sizes too large for him, complete with plumed hat, several rows of stars and medals and gold lace epaulettes the size of hassocks flapping from his shoulders. With the gold-encrusted tunic hanging about his wispy old frame like a frock-coat on a scarecrow, and the overalls, as usual in the Sinkiang Army, innocent of braces, he looked a regular Chinese Count Hedzoff of Paphlagonia; but there was a sinister feel behind the *opera-bouffe*—or was it only because we knew about the murders and torturings which went on somewhere behind the grim walls of his citadel?

Behind him we were relieved to see Chu Tao Tai and other official friends from the Old City; the Tao Tai whispered to us that he had made a point of being present as he was the only person who could keep the Titai in some sort of order. 574

The meal when it came was a remarkable experience. We sat down to a table which had evidently been arranged for the old man by Chu Tao Tai, for the seating and appointments were very much the same as at the latter's Yamen; but there the resemblance ended. The first thing our host did was to take off his uniform in front of us all and sit down in a suit of pale blue silk pyjamas, remarking as he did so that it was very hot and he could stand the uniform no longer. He then seized his chop-sticks and began piling our plates with messes from a mountain of mixed garbage in the middle of the table. Then he shouted to the crowd of minions behind his chair to bring his wine, with which he proceeded to fill our glasses, 273 telling me through Fitzmaurice that it was the best wine in China and contained seventy-one different ingredients, including pounded cuttle-fish bones and essence of tiger's claw. From the smell I could quite believe it, while as for the taste, it nearly took the roof off my mouth; it was not wine at all but exceedingly potent brandy. I heard afterwards that the Titai's brew with its seventy-one dopes was famous throughout Central Asia; it was believed that he owed his extraordinary health and strength (in spite of his age, he was drunk every day of his life) to the magic properties of some of the 574 ingredients. Shark's fin and the other usual delicacies followed, and then came the *pièce de résistance*; the middle of the table was cleared and a huge dish with a sheep roasted whole on it was brought in. Scarcely had it touched the table before the Titai fell on it with a large knife and began hacking at it, tearing off with his left hand chunks of meat and of skin with fat adhering to it and giving them to us. This I gathered was a great honour, and I did my best to eat some of the freshly-killed and therefore very tough meat, but without much success. However, as the Titai very soon became too drunk to notice much, my unworthy appetite escaped comment. The occasional remarks fired at me by our host and translated by Harding or Fitzmaurice were generally to the effect that he, the Titai, had the greatest respect for the King of England, about whose name he seemed to be rather hazy, and that he had been a personal friend of my predecessor and proposed to be mine too; also that he was on the best of terms with the President of the Chinese Republic, with whom he corresponded regularly, and who had recently asked him, as a favour, to take over the governorship of the Province. It was not easy to concoct suitable replies to these statements, and we were all thankful when, the barbaric meal over, Chu Tao Tai nodded to me and we were able to take our leave.

A week later I gave a return feast—a bachelor affair, for obvious reasons—for the Titai at the Consulate. It went off well enough in spite of our fears lest the old man should do something quite impossible ; in fact, it was as good as a play. The Tao Tai arrived first, and what with the three-gun salute he received and the grand carriage and pair in which he dashed up to the door and the crowd of bottle-washers which accompanied him, there was noise and bustle enough at his arrival ; but it was a quiet and peaceful affair compared with that of the Titai. Not only did the latter receive six guns, not only did he bring with him about a hundred soldiers and orderlies and hangers-on of all kinds, all armed to the teeth, not only did he arrive in an enormous troika at full gallop through the narrow streets, but he was preceded by an entire brass band, which dashed into the Consulate inner courtyard at the double, fell into line with lightning rapidity and struck up an ear-splitting Chinese version of " See the Conquering Hero comes ! "

The old man was again wearing his Field Marshal's uniform and the first thing he said to me was, " I want you to take my photograph, to send to the President of the Republic ! " Accordingly I had to take him out on to the terrace and pose him against the sundial while I took three portraits, being careful to arrange the lighting so that his face should not be under-exposed and so come out dark in the picture. No sooner had we finished the photographing than he borrowed a measuring-tape from me and set two of his men to work measuring the outer walls of the Consulate. It appeared that his enormous country-house about 16 miles from Kashgar had been burnt down the year before, and he wanted to rebuild it on the lines of the British Consulate General ! Throughout lunch his men continued to measure the walls of the dining-room, hall and other rooms.

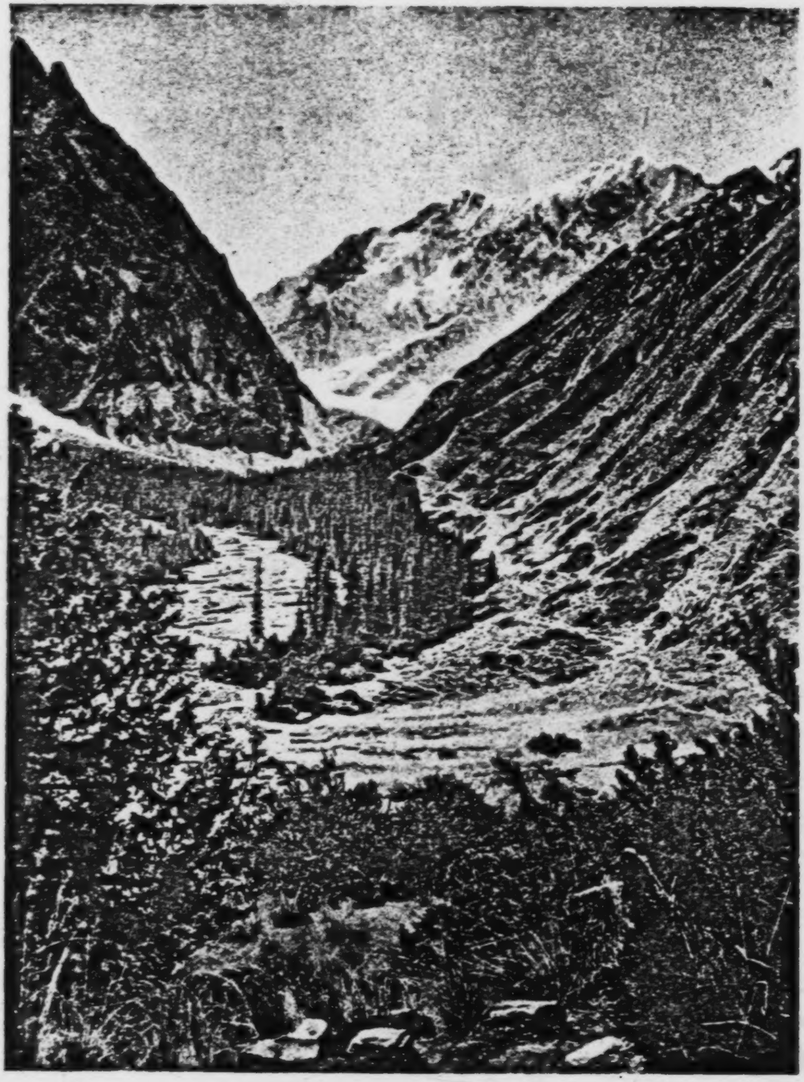
Before the meal I took the Titai to a private room to change his clothes—I did not want a recurrence of what had happened at his own party. During the meal, following his usual custom, the old General was served by his own men with his own arrack and would touch none of my drinks. I would not have minded if it had not been that he kept filling my glass and expecting me to drink his health in the horrible stuff: I had suffered it at his house, but did not see why I should not drink what I liked in my own. He himself had been at it ever since about 8 a.m., Chu Tao Tai whispered to me behind his hand, and I could see for myself that he was about half-seas-over; we were all relieved as well as surprised when suddenly, just before the ices, he nodded to his confidential servant and a second later whistles blew outside, everybody started running, the band struck up, the Titai got up unsteadily from the table, made hurried apologies and departed! He was gone before any of us knew where we were. 574

The leading households among the Swedish missionaries and the Russian colony, each after the manner of their respective nations, were kindness and hospitality personified, and often did we sally forth in the gathering dusk to take part in polyglot but pleasant gatherings round boards groaning with the products of Scandinavian or Muscovite cuisine. At first we drove to these parties in the tarantass, but after an adventure we had in that ancient vehicle our first winter, after a dinner at the Swedish Mission, we took to riding. D. generally rode her camel Sulaiman and I one of the horses, well wrapped up in furs and sheepskins and our feet encased in high "Gilgit boots" of leather thickly padded with felt. The adventure to which I refer is described in the words of a letter I wrote home shortly afterwards. 000

7th February, 1923.

"D. and I had a somewhat alarming experience the other night. Of the two Yarkandi horses we bought for the tarantass before our autumn tour we sold the smaller one soon after our return, but kept the other, a chestnut, as it is an exceptionally strong and willing beast. We didn't realize quite how willing it could be until last Friday when we started back from the Swedish Mission after dinner. The horse was always inclined to fidget at the start, but on tour he had long marches to do and gave little trouble. A month of good feeding and very little work, however, makes a lot of difference and on this occasion the nipping and eager air of a February night was too much for him. For some reason best known to themselves Turki drivers, including our coachman Abdulla Akhun, always start their horses from the ground and jump on to the box when the carriage is moving. We had hardly climbed into the tarantass and were waving farewells to our hosts, when we felt the ramshackle old conveyance bound forward under us; Abdulla at the horse's head hung on like a bull-dog, as did the orderly, tall Asadulla Khan, on the other side,-and all might have been well if Asadulla's mount, infected by the carriage horse, had not seized the opportunity to break away, kicking up his heels at his rival as he passed. Out of the gateway he dashed and after him sprang the infuriated chestnut, brushing off Abdulla and Asadulla like flies against the gateposts. Over the culvert and into the main road we swung on two wheels, then off at full gallop towards the distant Consulate. You probably know what a tarantass is like —a big, roomy affair with a hood and a basket-work body with no seats, in the bottom of which you sit or lie on mattresses while the driver sits in a high narrow box-seat in front. The front wheels are very small and the back ones large; the wheel-base is very narrow relatively to the size of the vehicle, and it is always a mystery to me why the whole affair does not upset far more easily than it does. Anyhow, there we were lurching and swaying like a ship in a storm along the unmetalled and heavily-rutted road, the reins mixed up with the traces somewhere below the shaft and hopelessly out of my reach. There was nothing for it but to sit tight, hold on to each other and wait for the crash. We thought, of course, that the horse was bolting. But he wasn't. He had merely decided to follow the other horse's example and go back to his stable with the least possible delay. The road is awful; there are two right-angled corners between the Mission and the Consulate (a distance of about a mile) and, worst of all, a narrow wooden bridge over a canal set almost at right angles to the road. This bridge is not more than 12 feet broad, is very uneven and has no parapet or railing. We thought the horse, having no one to drive him, *must* bungle it, in which case the tarantass would have overturned into the dry bed of the canal with us under it. Would you believe it, he slowed down *just* enough to take the bridge, our off wheels clearing the corner with about six inches to spare, and sprinted again directly we were over? Further down he took the two right-angled corners fast but with plenty to spare, not cutting them as most horses try to do even when driven. We thus entered the Consulate gateway at the gallop and shot up the drive, hoping against hope that the horse would by force of habit pull up in front of the quarter-guard. He ignored it. He went straight for his stable, rounding two more corners and missing first the office and then a railing by inches. Finally he came to a standstill, panting and sweating, in front of his stall. As you may imagine, we hopped out without undue delay and fell on each other's necks, hardly able to believe that we stood on terra firma. What we are now saying is, why pay a coachman when your carriage horse can drive himself without a mistake?"

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All



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THE HAPPY VALLEY

[Face p. 90]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER VII

THE FINDING OF THE HAPPY VALLEY

Good

ON October 11, 1922, we started on a two and a half months' tour along the south-eastern or Khotan road, on which the large majority of the British subjects in Kashgaria live. Our first long halt was to be at Yarkand, the largest town in Sinkiang and the entrepôt for the Indian and Afghan trade. Other important centres which had to be visited were Karghalik, Goma, Khotan and Keriya, at each of which there was a considerable amount of judicial and other Consular work to be done. Keriya was the farthest point I proposed to reach, 413 miles from Kashgar; the return journey (except for the last five stages) was to be by the same route, for lack of a practicable alternative.

By the direct road Yarkand is 127 miles from Kashgar, and is reached in five flat and perfectly easy marches. Instead of going straight to Yarkand, however, I proposed to indulge in a little amateur exploration among the mountains to the south of Kashgar on the way. It will be remembered that when I consulted Sir Aurel Stein at Delhi in the preceding January, he advised me to visit certain small blank patches still remaining in his map of the Kashgarian highlands. Of these the one which most fired my imagination comprised the eastern flanks of the Qungur massif (25,146 feet) and the peaks immediately to the south-east of it, part of the wall of snows which, as already described, stretches so impressively across Kashgar's south-western horizon. In order to gain access to this region it was necessary to penetrate the gorges of the Qaratash River, traversed in September 1913 by Stein alone among previous explorers.[1] Calculating that the floods

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[1] In his "Memoir on Maps of Chinese Turkistan and Kansu," p. 25, Sir Aurel explains the peculiar difficulties confronting the explorer in the Qaratash basin. During spring and summer, he says, the big floods from the melting snow and ice of the Muz Tagh Ata

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caused by the summer melting of the snows had subsided sufficiently, I now proposed to spend ten days—I could not spare more—in an attempt to penetrate these gorges from below, that is to say, from the opposite direction to that from which Stein had attacked them. I hoped thus to reach the Chimghan stream, the chief affluent of the Qaratash, and reconnoitre up it the eastern flanks of the great Qungur massif as well as the mysterious range to the south-east of it seen by Stein from the opposite (Pamirs) side and indicated in his map under the name "Shiwakte."

My "camp office" in charge of the Mir Munshi was to meet us on October 26, at Yarkand, where my official tour was to commence. For the Qaratash trip I engaged, at one tael (about 3s.) per day, seven shaggy two-humped Central Asian camels in charge of a fair-haired young Andijani carrier whom D. called Brian O'Flynn, because he wore enormous sheepskin trousers "with the skinny side out and the woolly side in." Our party for the mountain trip was strengthened by the inclusion of one of our Russian friends, M. Paul Nazaroff, a geologist of Tashkend who had the distinction of being the only English-knowing Russian in Kashgar. Our retinue consisted of Hafiz, Sangi Khan and the old Lancer, Rahim Khan, as orderlies; Ahmad Bakhsh as butler and valet; Murad Shah as cook and Yakub as "knight of the broom" and odd-job man. There was also a Kashgari lad, whose name I have forgotten, who looked after the horses. All of us rode horses except Yakub and the groom, for whom we hired a joint camel. I had the black Badakhshi stallion which had nearly been the end of me in Astore in June, but which was now much better-behaved, and D. her beloved bay Ferghana gelding. The camels carried three small double-fly tents

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range render the extremely confined gorges of the Qaratash River quite impassable; on the other hand, by the time the waters subside in the autumn, heavy snow on the passes at the head of the basin closes the approach from the south. He describes his descent through the gorges as "very difficult and in places risky" with "constant crossings of the river tossing between precipitous rock walls." Our descent of these gorges in April, 1923, is described in Chapter IX. They extend from the mouth of the Chimghan Jilgha to Khanterek, about 18 miles. There is a track, now only used by opium-smugglers, which goes from Little L. Qarakul over the Qaratash Pass (16,338 feet), into the upper Qaratash valley and out of it again by the Ghijaq Pass to Ighiz Yar and the plains. But this route, which has been followed by Korniloff, Stein and one or two others, crosses the Qaratash well above the gorges.

with bath-room attachment and furniture complete, including comfortable Rurki-pattern camp beds and mattresses, valises containing bedding and "yakdans"—the pack-transport boxes already described—for our belongings, hurricane lanterns and oil to burn in them, an extra table for meals, pots and pans and three yakdans of stores for the kitchen, a camel-load of corn for the horses, a roomy single-fly tent and ten days' bread-rations for the men, plane-table and other survey instruments, shot-guns and cartridges and, last but not least, a tin-lined wooden bath-tub of immense solidity constructed under my supervision by our Kashgari carpenter, with two oil-tins fitted with handles to heat the bath-water in. It will thus be seen that we made no attempt to travel light. Personally, though I have roughed it often enough, I am no believer in what I call the "toothbrush theory" of travel, except where economy of time or money is essential. Many travellers in wild parts, even Government servants in receipt of a fixed and liberal travelling allowance, either pride themselves on dispensing with baths and clean shirts and undergoing all sorts of unnecessary hardships, or, more often, adopt a fatalistic attitude and say "You've got to rough it anyhow; trekking is always uncomfortable compared with home; more kit and servants, more bother; better go the whole hog, travel light and get back to civilization as quickly as you can." Well, maybe mine is not the stuff that pioneers are made of, but I always try to take a reasonable amount of civilization into camp with me. I find that regular and properly-cooked meals, pillows and a real mattress (albeit stuffed with cotton from the bazaar) and daily baths, if only in a canvas tub, make such a difference to my enjoyment of travel that they are worth far more than the extra trouble and expense involved. D.'s views are the same, and she took a legitimate pride in the fact that throughout all our travels, accidents excepted, we invariably had early tea, hot breakfast with tea or coffee, plenty of variety in our sandwich lunches, afternoon tea and a three-course dinner with coffee after it. We were seldom without English bread and green vegetables; we used to start off with a good supply of Daud's loaves and a sack of vegetables, after which the couriers who came out after us weekly from Kashgar with our letters and official mail brought more bread, plum-cake and green vegetables. Spinach and potatoes could be obtained in most towns; chickens and eggs at every village of the plains; mutton and dairy produce everywhere, even among the wildest mountains. When out of reach of bread D. set to and baked girdle scones, three or four dozen at a time, also small sponge and chocolate cakes and puff pastry for sausage rolls and jam turn-overs. Some of her most successful puff pastry was made on or near glaciers because, she explained, there was plenty of iced water handy with which to chill the ingredients and her fingers! All this entails what we in India call "bundobust," and makes for an unwieldy caravan according to the standards of toothbrush travel. But it must be remembered that in Muhammadan countries at any rate—I can speak for no others—one's prestige (and therefore that of the country one represents) depends very much upon the size of one's caravan. Nobody gives one any credit for being a hardy traveller and a lover of the simple life; it is merely supposed that one is not a real "sahib" and cannot afford to travel better.

Our first halt was at Yapchan on the main Yarkand road, from which we turned southwards across country towards the mountains, still hidden from us by the dust-haze of summer. At Akhtur Bazaar, where we were interested to find the remains of an ancient fortress of considerable size, we crossed for the first time the Qaratash River, here a wide, shallow stream flowing through meadows and cornfields. Thence the track led for five miles through well-timbered arable land and then emerged on a gently-sloping gravel desert, evidently the alluvial fan of the same river. Traversing this for seven miles we came to the head of the Altunluk ("Golden") oasis at the debouchure of the Qaratash from the foothills. For our adventures during the next nine days I quote from my letters home, which I have cast into diary form.

Altunluk, 13th October, 1922.

Our tents are pitched in a pleasant little orchard gay with autumn tints. I have just been in long conclave with the villagers and old Sabit Beg, who has been sent with us by the Amban of Yangi Hissar. Sabit, I gather, is the Beg of the Qaratash Valley and responsible for the collection of revenue from the Kirghiz; he is a nice old person, though rather excitable. We shall get on well, I think, but in the meantime he is being rather obstructive, having obviously put up the villagers to tell me that we cannot possibly go up the Qaratash—floods, ice, precipices, no paths, no food, etc., etc. Every one is trying to frighten us. However they have to admit that the season is well advanced and the water a good deal down. I fancy that whenever one leaves the beaten track in this country the local people and their Beg take this line; one can understand their point of view, because the Chinese always come down heavily on the Beg concerned if anything happens to a foreigner travelling in the districts, and the Beg takes it out of the local people. Anyhow I propose to push up the river as far as we can get to-morrow. For all we can see of the mountains we might be in the middle of the Takla Makan; the accursed dust-haze which has hidden them ever since July is as bad as ever.

Saman, 14th October.

We have done well to-day, covering some 22 miles up the ever-narrowing valley of the Qaratash. We forded the river without difficulty 8 miles above Altunluk and continued for 9 miles along the left bank among bare, gradually-rising foothills. At only one place, about a mile and a half from here, was there any difficulty; at a point where the river breaks through a ridge of red sandstone the left bank becomes precipitous and we had to cross and recross the stream which was there much narrower, deeper and swifter than at our first ford. Here at Saman the left bank is wide and easy again and the river flows in a broad, straight reach about 5 miles long with steep red hills on either side. This is the first place where we have seen any traces of occupation by the Kirghiz of the mountains; there are two tumbledown crofts and a few acres of arable land, once under the plough but now deserted, and a pleasant little grove of planes and *toghrak* or desert poplar by which we are camped. No Kirghiz have appeared yet.

Bash Kupruk, 15th October.

We started comfortably enough to-day with 4 miles easy marching along flat terraces; then came more "narrows," with the track twisting among boulders at the very edge of the water which raced past us at about 15 miles an hour. At one place we had to "ford" a pool full of eddies where a corner of rock jutted out into the stream. Then the valley suddenly widened out again and we came to a pretty place called Khanterek or Qurghan (*qurghan* = fort, from which I gather this strategic point was once fortified, in the days when the hill people had to defend themselves from the men of the plains). There is a *tām* (lit. wall) or mud-brick farm-house here, with a little orchard of apricots and fields from which crops have only lately been reaped; I am told that there ought to be Kirghiz here, but they evidently think we have come to eat them, for there is not a soul to be seen. This is the winter headquarters, they say, of the Kirghiz of two or three glens above here. Close by the river flows through a deep narrow cut with a high cliff on the further side; here there is the first bridge we have seen, a curious affair of which the nearer end is built out on the cantilever system quite cleverly, while the other ends of the three tree-trunks which form the bridge rest on a le[illegible]e of the opposite cliff. Above the bridge is carried an aqueduct consisting of hollowed tree-trunks which takes water to a couple of farms below the bridge on the other side of the river.

A mile further up we crossed the river by a wide and easy ford and kept up the right bank towards what looked like a blank wall of mountain many thousands of feet high. We could not see how the stream came out of it until we were quite close to the mouth of the

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

000 Tügene Tar or "Camel's Gorge," so called I suppose because only the long-legged camel is happy in it. In this gorge we had to cross the river nine times, and each time it was more unpleasant doing it on horseback than the last. D.'s old bay horse is splendid in water, as he is well-bred and a high-stepper and so keeps his feet well; but my black is a stumbler on dry land, as I know to my cost, and in the deeper parts of the current he lurches all over the place. Several times he lost his footing and I found myself up to the waist in the cold Qaratash. Luckily the bottom is good at most of the fords and none of the horses were swept down-stream; most Kashgar horses indeed are adepts at crossing rivers, thanks to the practice they get.

A fortnight ago, the Beg says, we could not have got up even as far as this with horses. I asked him how the Kirghiz get through these gorges in summer when the water is too high even for camels; he said that they go on foot, and pointed up to what looked like half a dozen matches spilt over the cliff-face far above us. This, he explained, was a Kirghiz summer "road," *i.e.* thin tree-trunks laid along from ledge to ledge of the precipice, a most terrifying affair.

316 Just before entering the gorge we came upon chikor (red-legged partridge), and I got two or three, much to the housekeeper's delight. On the opposite side of the river we at last saw signs of present human occupation, the smoke of a camp-fire; I was told that there was a coal-mine there[1] which is worked by the Chinese military authorities with local labour. The "mine" appears to be a tiny affair, a mere surface working employing a dozen men or so.

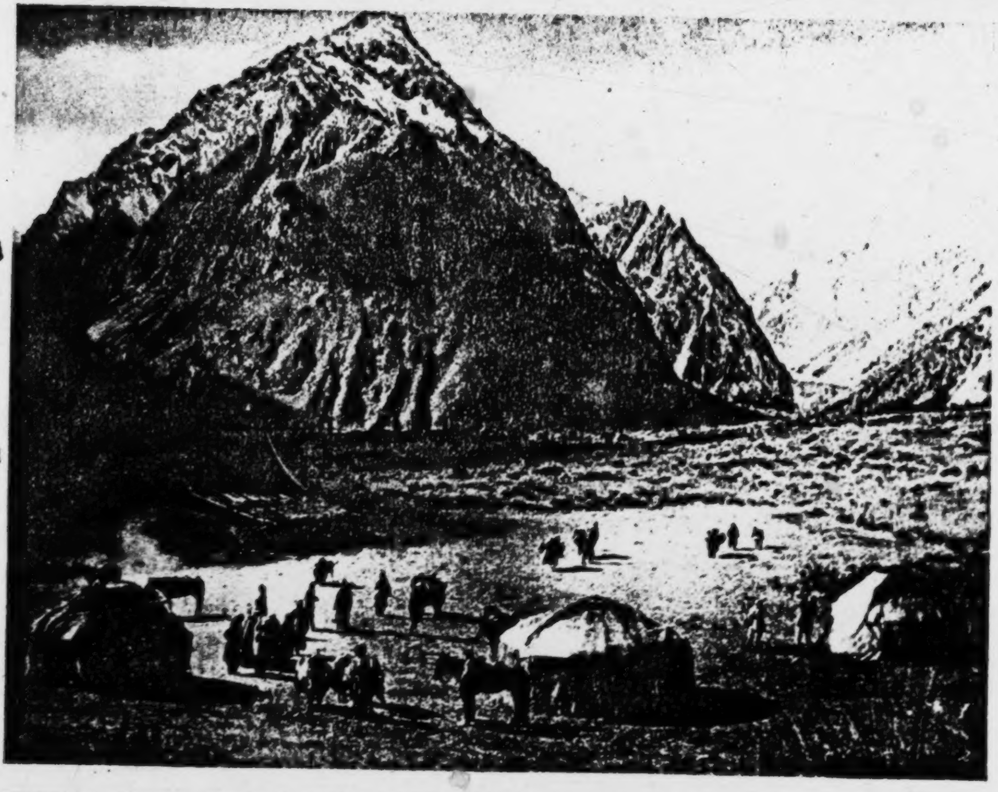
000 It was six o'clock before we came to a possible camping place here at Bash Kupruk and we were thankful for the partial shelter of a thicket of tamarisk and willow in which to pitch our tents. There is a deserted Kirghiz hut, too, for the men. An icy night-wind sweeps down the gorge, which they say is even narrower and more difficult ahead, so as there is plenty of firewood and grazing for the camels I have decided to halt here for a day or two and give the animals a rest. We are 7,000 feet up here according to my aneroid, and the cold dry autumn weather has evidently set in; even at Saman this morning, at 6,000 feet, our sponges were frozen hard. However, dry cold is better than either rain or the thick, hazy summer atmosphere, and there are welcome signs that the air is clearing of dust-haze; this morning when we got up we were delighted with the sight from our tents of a magnificent snow-peak rising dimly but grandly above the river-valley straight in front of us. We soon lost sight of it behind nearer heights as we marched on, but there it is, quite close to us. Can it be one of the Shiwakte peaks?

Bash Kupruk, 16th October.

The mountains here are mostly unclimbable except for a properly-equipped Alpine climbing party, but this morning I noticed, about a mile up-river, a spur coming down from the west which seemed comparatively easy. Stein in his traverse of the Qaratash gorge marks here a side-valley called the Kaying Jilgha, which goes right up into the blank patch to the east of Qungur. I accordingly took Hafiz and a Kirghiz guide whom the Beg has managed to collect from somewhere and set up my plane-table first at the mouth of the

[1] [AT BASH KUPRUK -- ANALYST]

[Face p. 96]



STARTING ON THE MARCH IN THE KAYING VALLEY, OCTOBER, 1922

~~[p. 99~~

000 Kaying Jilgha (glen) and then at a point about 2,000 feet up the spur. From here we got a tantalizing and rather hazy view of fine snow-clad peaks not more than 7 or 8 miles away to the west, apparently enclosing the head of the Kaying Jilgha. I drew rays to all the peaks I could see on both sides of the main valley; the only one which looked at all climbable on our side was a high double-peaked mass of dark grey limestone opposite me across the Kaying glen, which I have identified as Stein's "Kaying Beli," the last peak shown in this direction in his map. Though fearfully steep and in places precipitous, I think I can manage it with Sangi Khan to help, and am going to have a try to-morrow. With any luck I ought to see the Shiwakte and the east face of Qungur from the top.

The prospects of our getting through to Chimghan are not bright. I sent Rahim Khan up to reconnoitre to-day, and he has come back with a most gloomy account of the gorge. He says that further up the cliffs almost meet overhead and you have to march actually in the river, which completely fills the gorge. Finally he was held up by deep water. The Kirghiz guide says that it is not possible for animals to get up to Chimghan for another month. Of course they may all be exaggerating in order to prevent us going further, but it is not worth while risking our lives or our animals', so I have decided to give up the Chimghan idea and reconnoitre up the Kaying Jilgha instead. From what I saw to-day the Kaying gorge looks quite practicable, and the Kirghiz say the stream is harmless at this time of year.

D. and Nazaroff sportingly went all the way back with Sangi Khan to the mouth of the Tügene Tar to-day to try and get some more of those partridges, but came back with nothing but wet feet from the crossings.

Kaying Yailāq, 18th October.

Yesterday Sangi Khan, a Kirghiz lad and I did the stiffest rock-climb I have ever been faced with, five thousand feet without a break. Leaving camp at seven, we rode two miles up the Kaying Jilgha to a height of 7,800 feet and then, leaving our ponies to graze, struck up the mountain-side. Loose scree at an angle of 35° led up to cliffs, up which we scrambled laboriously, hauling up the plane-table and cameras from rock to rock. It was hard work and in places really difficult, but so magnificent was the panorama which unfolded itself as we went up that I was scarcely conscious of the fact. Half-way up I could already see away to the south-west, right in the middle of the blank patch on the map, a glittering array of peaks which can be none other than the Shiwakte. Finally at midday we came out on to a splintered pinnacle of rock which formed the eastern summit of Kaying Beli, at a height of 12,750 feet by my aneroid, *i.e.* nearly 5,000 feet above the bottom of the Kaying Jilgha. There was no snow, and it was delicious basking in the sun on the dry rocks on a perfect day, with a most amazing array of snow-peaks round two-thirds of the horizon. We all three ate our lunches, each according to our kind, contentedly, and then, while the men lolled about and talked and smoked cigarettes presented them by D., I perched my plane-table on a slab of rock and spent nearly three hours taking rays to all the chief points and a long panorama with my quarter-plate film-camera. Unfortunately the higher peaks, which on the way up had been clear, had already by midday begun to veil themselves in cloud and also to a certain extent in dust-haze, but I could see them well enough for survey purposes and the panorama ought to be some use if it comes out. I am going to develop it this evening. The most exciting part of the view was to the west, where to the right of the dim Shiwakte peaks there was a great accumulation of cloud from which at one point peeped the butt-end of a mighty ridge of ice, beyond and obviously far higher than the Shiwakte, though they were evidently not less than 20,000 feet high. It could be no other than Qungur, and it is just my luck that I should have had so tantalizingly small a glimpse after such a tremendous climb. Right across the southern sky stretch a forest of peaks with huge glaciers coming down from them, not so high as the Shiwakte but going up, I should say, to eighteen or nineteen thousand, beyond which must be the big Chimghan Jilgha indicated (but not explored) by Stein. To the south-east was another range no less fine, that to the east of the Qaratash valley. To the north I could make out the whole lower course of the Qaratash for 30 miles, and beyond its mouth at Altunluk, dimly, the plains.

It was past three when I tore myself away from that slab of rock, too late for safety as it turned out; for the descent (as often happens) proved much worse than the ascent. I wanted to go back the same way we had come, but the guide insisted on taking a short cut. The result was that after being several times in difficulties we found ourselves at sunset on the edge of a sixty-foot drop into the ravine we had ascended in the morning. There seemed no way down, and we were faced with the prospect of a chilly night on the waterless crags of Kaying Beli; for there was not time before dark to climb halfway up the mountain again and find another way down. On our left a short grass slope pitched at an angle of 45° disappeared round the corner, and we crawled round this in the hopes of finding an easier way down into the ravine, but we had to crawl back again; it was worse beyond. On the way, however, I noticed a crack in the rock-face with a small bush growing in it, which promised a possible route; I pointed it out to Sangi Khan, who had kept his head admirably and proved invaluable throughout the climb. He at once took a firm grip of a tuft of grass and let himself over the edge into the crack. Working down it, he tested the bush and reported it strong enough to bear his weight. Peering over the edge, I could see him in the failing light for what seemed an age, hanging on to the bush with his hands and feeling with his feet for further footholds. Finally to my relief he shouted up that it was all right, so I followed, taking the plane-table and other impedimenta from the Kirghiz guide and handing them down to Sangi Khan. Helping each other with foot- and hand-holds we all three worked down the crag, till finally with many *Alhamdu'l illahs* and *Khuda-gha shukrias*[1] we found ourselves

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[1] Arabic and Turki respectively for "Praise be to God" and "Thanks be to God."

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

in the bed of the ravine. Even then our troubles were by no means over, for there were two or three "dry waterfalls" to negotiate, and it was quite dark before we at last reached the valley-bottom of the Kaying Jilgha.

It was past eight o'clock when we were met a mile from camp by D. and Nazaroff, who had come out with lamps and a search-party. They greeted me with the interesting news that they had spent the day, as arranged, in a reconnaissance up the Kaying Jilgha; that the gorge was practicable for our convoy, and that two hours' march up it the jilgha widened into a comparatively broad valley, containing firs and rich pastures and encircled by magnificent snow-peaks. The Beg and Rahim Khan, who had accompanied them, had evidently conspired together to put D. off, for at each corner they had gone ahead and pronounced the way hopelessly blocked; but she gallantly insisted on pushing on, and finally was rewarded not only with the above-mentioned view but with the sight of Kirghiz tents with people, even women, in them. These were the first Kirghiz, other than one or two guides impressed by the Beg, whom any of us had seen, and D. and Nazaroff only found them because they had not expected any of our party to come up so far and therefore had not had time to escape to still remoter fastnesses. Evidently the Kirghiz imagine us to be the Titai or somebody out to rob them or make them work in mines. The Kaying Kirghiz, finding that the strangers were not so terrifying after all and reassured by the Beg as to our intentions, warmly invited us all to come up the jilgha, and offered us supplies and tents to sleep in if we wanted them.

Accordingly this morning we moved up here and are camped in three Kirghiz tents in a sunny corner under a cliff at the lower end of a wonderful amphitheatre, about a mile and a half wide. Extraordinary spires of black rock tower four or five thousand feet above us; and away at the head of the valley is a glittering vision, clad in pure white névé and pale-green hanging glaciers, which I recognize as one of the Shiwakte peaks I saw yesterday from the top of Kaying Beli. We have left half our caravan, including the tents, in charge of Ahmad Bakhsh and Rahim Khan at Bash Kupruk in order to lighten our baggage. We are not exactly comfortable, as our kind hosts are very poor and the felts of their tents are full of holes which let the icy wind into every cranny and made the bath problem a difficult one; but what does it matter? The weather is perfect, the Kirghiz are charming, and we are well into the blank patch on the map—what more could one want?

Kaying Yailāq, 19th October, 1922.

The thermometer stood at 10° F. when we woke up this morning, and getting up would have been most unpleasant if it had not been for an admirable invention of my old "bearer" Amar Singh's, which saves the situation on such occasions—the fire-bucket. This simply consists of the kitchen bucket filled with glowing embers and placed in one's tent, which it instantly transforms from an ice-house into an ingle-nook. The length of time it keeps the tent in this desirable condition depends on the kind of firewood; poplar, the universal firewood of the plains, loses its heat rapidly, but juniper, fir, and even

600 the brushwood roots of the hills keep one snug for hours. Of course, it is advisable to put the fire-bucket out of the tent before getting into bed, because of the charcoal fumes given off; but if one's bed is as it should be and one starts the night thoroughly warm, it does not matter how cold it becomes later.[1]

At half-past nine the shadow of one of the great aiguilles moved off us and the sun flooded our corner of the valley with delicious warmth. The dust-haze has entirely disappeared and the intense clarity and brilliance of the weather remind us of the Pamirs in July. At the gentlemanly hour of ten we rode off in high spirits to explore the head of the valley. A mile from camp we entered a wood of junipers, fine tall trees some of them like those of Baluchistan, in which there were many hares and partridges. We were filing along through the wood, expecting it to tail off into barren hill-sides, when suddenly we topped a rise and saw before us, filling the whole of the valley right up to the foot of the black precipices, a fine forest of tall firs, their deep shade contrasting perfectly with the brilliant snows of the Shiwakte behind and with the white foaming flood of the Kaying river in the foreground. This forest had been hidden from our camp, from which we had only seen a few firs up a side-glen, and was totally unexpected; it is indeed a find, for we have seen nothing like a forest since we left Kashmir and had no idea there were any on this side of the Karakoram nearer than the Tien Shan. The trees, some of which must be more than a hundred feet high, are like tall, slender Wellingtonias and are different from anything I have seen in the Himalayas.

On a sheltered alpine meadow below the forest we changed our saddles on to riding-yaks which the friendly Kirghiz had brought to relieve our horses, saying that the path became very steep further up. They were fine yaks and took us at a good pace—for yaks—up through the forest glades. Passing two or three more grassy alps, with tremendous aiguilles and cliffs with fantastically-twisted strata towering higher and higher above our heads, we came to wide, sheltered meadows at Kaying Bashi Yailaq, *i.e.* "the summer grazings at the head of the K. Jilgha." More firs, and then at 12,000 feet we came out on to grassy knolls above the highest verge of the forest. Another surprise! There in front of us, curving down in a grand sweep from unknown heights round to the left, was a huge glacier, on the terminal moraine of which we were standing. High above us on our right we could see the ice-fall of another glacier at a higher level; between the two soared the pinnacles and hanging glaciers of the Shiwakte, seven

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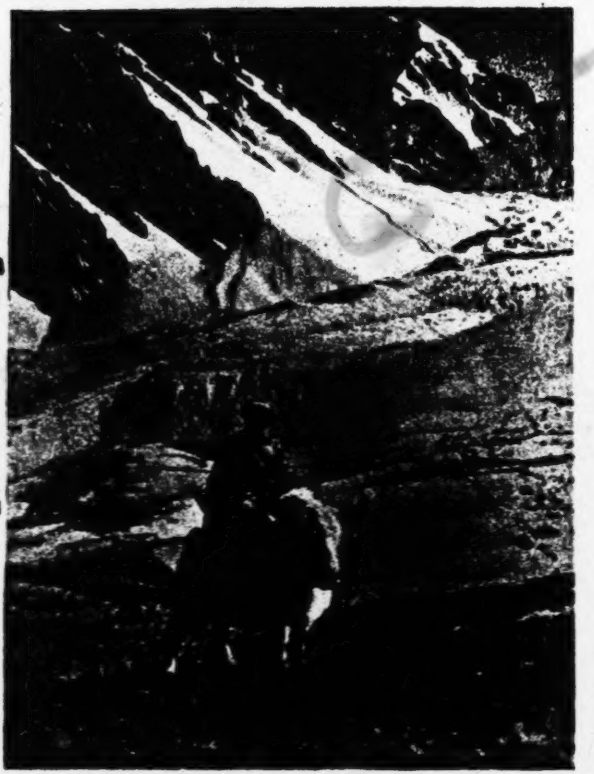
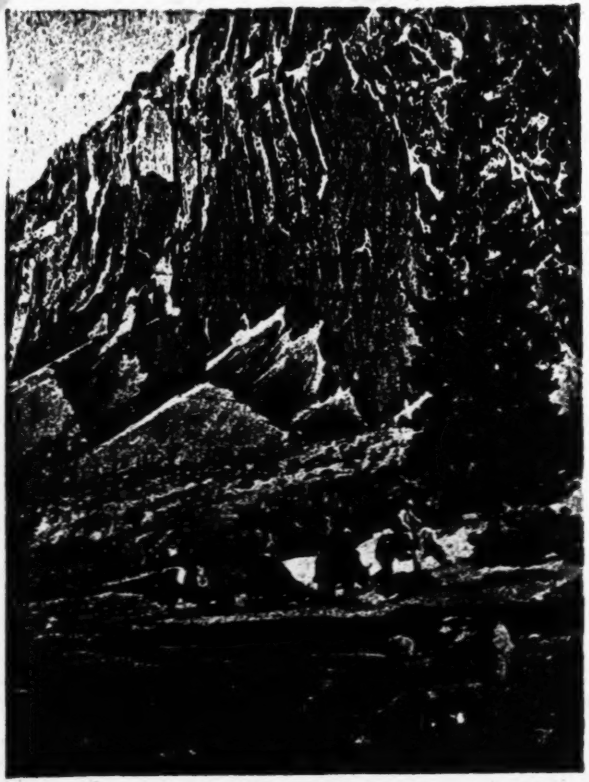
[1] While on this subject, it is worth remembering that on a really draughty night it is not enough to have plenty of bedclothes on top of one; what is *under* one is just as important. I did not know this when I first started trekking in South Persia in winter; the first night I spent at 9,000 feet I could not keep warm and hardly slept a wink. I piled all my clothes and everything in the tent on top of me, down to the bathroom mat, but continued to shiver. Next night it occurred to me to put a sheepskin under my thin cotton-stuffed mattress, and the difference was astonishing; I was as snug as could be.

[Face p.100]



IN THE GLACIER "CIRQUE" OF THE UPPER KAYING JILGHA; D. ON HER YAK



"FOLDED" LIMESTONE STRATA, KAYING JILGHA

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

or eight thousand feet above us and quite close. Determined to climb as high as we could before returning, we pushed up the moraine, which we finally lost at 13,100 feet amid a tumbled waste of boulders covering the ice of the glaciers themselves. Here we sat on the last bit of dry grass for half an hour basking in the sun, with a magnificent array of peaks towering above us on every side. Far below us we could see the forest and the milk-white glacier-stream curving away behind tremendous black pinnacles, which we have christened the "Cathedral Spires," towards the gorge of the Qaratash. Above us, there was only one corner of the amphitheatre of cliffs which was hidden and looked as if it might contain a possible pass out of the valley; I asked the Kirghiz about it and they said that there was a pass but that it was very steep and covered with ice, and could only be crossed by men on foot, not yaks, during two or three months in summer. This was interesting, and the next question was, where did it lead to? To the Chimghan Jilgha, they said. This was positively exciting, for it meant that there was a way by which the Qaratash gorges could be "turned" in summer and the Chimghan Jilgha reached from the Kaying valley at the best time of year. If only we can get up here next summer, perhaps on the way down to India! One thing seems quite certain, and that is that I cannot reach the foot of Qungur by this route unless I cross that pass; for the Kirghiz are quite positive that it is impossible to climb out of the valley in the direction of the "Muz Tagh" (ice mountain) at any other point. They simply do not know what there is the other side of the ice-cliffs to the west.

To-morrow if it keeps fine I am going to do one more big climb in the hopes of seeing Qungur, and then we must tear ourselves away from our "Happy Valley," for we are due at Yarkand on the 26th and are already likely to be late. The Kirghiz say there is a steep but easy pass above our camp leading over into the Chopkana Jilgha which comes out close to Khanterek, so we are going back by it with yaks and sending our tents and camels down to meet us at Khanterek. By this means we shall not only avoid the wearisome river-crossings in the gorges but strike interesting new ground, for they say there are Kirghiz and fir-woods in the Chopkana Jilgha.

Kaying Yailāq, 20th October, 1922.

To-day I climbed with Sangi Khan and two Kirghiz carrying my plane-table and cameras to a height of 13,430 feet on a splintered rock-ridge called Nichke Qir, immediately under a high chisel-shaped peak called Kök Döng to the west of this camp, the same, I think, as the beautiful mountain we saw from Saman. The climb, though excessively steep, was not so difficult as that of Kaying Beli, but I did not get quite so high as I had hoped; the summit I was making for proved inaccessible and I had to be content with a lower one. However, I was just high enough to see the upper half of the glittering dome of Qungur appearing like a vast Christmas cake over the jagged top of the Kök Döng ridge. I took a telephoto of it with one of the very few slow plates I have with me, which, if it comes out, will be the only photo in existence of the east side of Qungur. Stein's are all from the Pamirs. The panorama I took from Kaying Beli came out

600 very well, and the negatives of it which I took up with me to-day were most useful in enabling me to identify the various peaks. Again I spent three hours on the top, mapping and photographing, but this time there were no contretemps on the way down and we returned to camp before sunset. D. and Nazaroff have had a good day too. They went out shooting rock-pigeons this morning and got two each, and in the afternoon D. gave a tea-party to the Kirghiz women and children of the valley. This has caused great excitement. Seven women and two children came, all there are in the valley, bringing their own wooden bowls like school-children their mugs to a treat. D. had plenty of bread baked for the occasion in one of the *aq-ois* and had also made some drop-scones herself; she bought quantities of rich yaks' milk in the morning and used up in the tea most of our remaining supply of sugar, which the ladies with squeaks of delight scooped with their fingers out of the bottom of their bowls.

Khanterek, 21st October, 1922.

All the Kirghiz, including D.'s guests of yesterday, came to see us off this morning and seemed genuinely sorry to bid us adieu, begging us to come again next year. The Chopkana pass proved 11,500 feet high and fairly easy, though loaded camels could not have crossed
136 it. At the top, under the crags of Kaying Beli, I went after a covey of snow-cock, which the Kirghiz call *ulai*, but they were far too wild. This bird seems to be the same as the *rām chikor* of the Himalayas, and is the size of a bustard; he is a true partridge and is marked like a chikor, but, living like the ptarmigan on or near the snow-line, he has more white about him. His bill is curved like a hawk's, very
361 curious in a partridge. Just below the pass on the north side is the highest summer *yailāq* or camping-place of the Kirghiz, a pretty "alp" with firs; there was nobody there, but a mile further down at Ui-chi we found small crofts and tents and three or four families
291 of Kirghiz. Two of the women wore most wonderful head-dresses, peaked fore and aft and garnished with red embroidery, quite different from the flat-topped turbans of the ladies of the Pamirs. Apparently only the richer ones wear this curious head-dress. All the Kirghiz
600 crowded round D. for medicine; her daily "sick parade" has become quite an institution and is probably the chief reason of our popularity.

The Chopkana people have brought down an *aq-oi* for us to the little apricot grove by the bridge. We have come down 3,000 feet from Kaying and 5,000 from the top of the pass, and the warmth in this sheltered spot is delightful. To-morrow the caravan goes to Saman only, as we want to reconnoitre the Achiq Jilgha, a side-glen at the top of which I am told there is a pass leading over the Gez River and the main winter road between Kashgar and the Pamirs.

The problems of travel in the wilds have been enormously simplified for us on this pioneer trip by the admirable behaviour of our men, all of whom work splendidly so that everything runs with clockwork precision. Our programme on an average march is as follows. At seven Ahmad Bakhsh brings tea to our respective tents, shortly followed by Yakub and the tub. Yakub has had the bath-water simmering in its oil-tins on his own particular fire since the night before; the same tins provide the hot water required in the kitchen. By

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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8.15 we are both dressed, our bags and basins packed and (with the help of the orderlies) our beddings rolled up. Meanwhile the breakfast-table has been laid in a sunny corner well away from the tents and we sit down to it, while the orderlies strike the tents, take down the beds and other camp furniture and tie the whole lot up into the regular loads. Breakfast over, the kitchen is packed up by Ahmad Bakhsh and Murad while we superintend the loading of the camels by the carriers assisted by Hafiz and Sangi Khan, who are themselves expert loaders by this time. The kitchen loads are tied on last and by 9.30 if not sooner the caravan is ready to start; the groom brings the horses ready saddled and we are off. I always make a point of seeing the caravan off in the mornings, as well as of "nursing" it through difficult places, gorges, river-crossings, and so on. Two orderlies accompany D. and myself each day and the third marches with the caravan; the two who accompany us carry the lunch-bag, guns and cartridges, binoculars, tea-basket, cameras and surveying instruments, if required. Most of these things go into a big camel-*khurjin* (saddle-bags) slung over the saddle of one of the orderlies. We ride within sight of the caravan, keeping it up to the mark as regards pace, until about noon, when we push forward, trotting, cantering and walking by turns till one. Then we have our lunch in some suitable spot, always followed by a piece of chocolate from England (I am responsible for this item in the commissariat) and a cigarette, and wait till the caravan has passed through. The same process is repeated in the afternoon; we ride with the caravan for some time, then go ahead and find a good place for tea-basket tea, during which function the caravan passes through. To expedite the making of tea we always have an "unbreakable" thermos bottle of hot water with us. Sometimes the caravan is in by 5 p.m., but more often not before six or later; on these occasions, wherever we are, the tents are up, beds made and furniture in position within three-quarters of an hour and we are sitting down to dinner in less than half an hour after that. This is because everybody knows his job and does it, including D. and myself; she puts up the lighter chairs and tables while I help with the tents and afterwards with the Rurki-pattern beds, which are rather troublesome to put up though so comfortable as to be well worth the trouble.

At Khanterek we were once more on the road by which we had come up, and our journey from that place to Yarkand does not merit detailed description. The Kirghiz of the glens above Khanterek seemed no less sorry to see the last of us than those of Kaying, an attitude which contrasted pleasingly with the nervousness and distrust with which they had watched us penetrate their fastnesses. We took a particular liking to these unsophisticated folk, none of whom probably had ever seen a European before—certainly none of the women. They were friendly, hospitable, cheerful and above all *natural*—unselfconscious and unspoilt. Most travellers who have come to Kashgar by the main routes have had little to say

600 about the Kirghiz, and that little uncomplimentary; this is probably because the Kirghiz living on main routes become sophisticated by contact with the outside world, and in their dealings with travellers of all kinds and with their Chinese masters develop qualities such as greed and untruthfulness not usually found in those inhabiting almost inaccessible valleys off the beaten track.

We carried out one more small reconnaissance before 487 leaving the hills, exploring a side-glen a mile below Khanterek called the Achiq Jilgha, so named from a copious spring of water impregnated with carbonic acid which it contains. We found an excessively steep but not dangerous pass at the top leading over to a side-valley of the Gez River, a discovery of some interest as it meant that we could, if necessary, reach Kaying in the high-water season by going by the "Nine Passes" route up the Gez Valley and then crossing over into the Qaratash Valley above the Narrows. We stayed too long basking in the sun on a grassy hill-top near the summit of the pass, with the result that we were overtaken by darkness while still five miles from Saman and had an unpleasant experience picking our way in the dark among rough boulders under cliffs at the very edge of the foaming river which gleamed white and hungry in the starlight. Next day we had an uneventful march to Kampar, a pleasant village gay with autumn tints on the southern slope of a range of gravel foothills, from which we had a magnificent view of the mountains we had left behind us. The needle peaks of the Shiwakte were there and chisel-shaped Kök Döng, and towering away behind, dwarfing them all, the great white dome of Qungur.

Here Nazaroff left us, as he had to return to Kashgar. After a day's halt to rest the animals, we marched in one day 33 miles to Ighiz Yar by an unsurveyed but perfectly straightforward route. Another march, this time of 16 miles only, brought us to the dusty village of Kizil Bazar on the main Kashgar-Yarkand road. Next day we had another long ride of 28 miles across gravel desert to the first oasis of the Yarkand District, Kok Rabat, 22 miles from the city.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER VIII

YARKAND, KHOTAN AND BEYOND

FOR variety, charm and old-world interest the road to Khotan and Keriya is perhaps unsurpassed in Central Asia, and I would like nothing better than to be able to devote half a dozen chapters to it. But it is relatively speaking a well-beaten track, and I must confine myself to impressions and experiences which differ from or supplement those of other travellers.[1] Yarkand and the Khotan road have changed little since Sir Aurel Stein's first journey in 1900, and still less since 1915, when Miss Sykes visited the latter place with her distinguished brother. D. and I sampled most of the same inns, rest-houses and private "gardens" as they, sat through the same endless but usually amusing Chinese banquets, sipped tea and made polyglot conversation at the same frequent wayside receptions, gazed on the same kaleidoscopic bazaar crowds and revelled in the same rich-hued countrysides and limitless desert horizons.

Owing to the lateness of the season our stay at Yarkand was limited on the outward journey to eleven days, to the disappointment of the numerous British subjects of different races to whom a visit from their Consul-General is a great event. We were not so fortunate as Sir A. Stein, who resided in what had once been the palace of Niaz Hakim Beg, last indigenous ruler of Khotan; that interesting relic of past times had, we were told, fallen to ruin, and we occupied a pleasant though somewhat draughty little country-house in a garden known as the Bar Gah, just far enough from the bazaars to be quiet and "countryfied." Bryan O'Flynn and the camels were paid off here and carts engaged for our 200-mile journey to Khotan along the edge of the Takla Makan Desert. This occupied nine marches, besides which we halted six days at Karghalik and one at Goma, 41 and 98 miles respectively from Yarkand. At Khotan we stayed four days as the guests of Khan Sahib Badruddin Khan, an old friend and assistant of Sir Aurel Stein's in his archæological work in the Khotan and Keriya oases. The following extracts from diaries and letters cover the period from our arrival at Yarkand on 28th October to our departure from Khotan for Keriya on 28th November 1922.

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[1] For a description of the Kashgar-Yarkand-Khotan road, see Stein, "Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan"; Miss Sykes, "Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia."

Yarkand, 29th October, 1922.

Our arrival at Yarkand yesterday was obviously an event of the first importance. The excitement was far greater and the reception preparations more elaborate than when we came to Kashgar last July; I suppose they are comparatively *blasés* about Consuls at Kashgar. The Aqsaqal, Tilla Khan, actually met us on the Kashgar side of Kok Rabat the day before, twenty-five miles from the city; he is a Maulai of Wakhan and speaks no Urdu, only Persian. Fifteen miles from the city a large party of Hindus and Muhammadans met us on the road, chiefly, I gather, gentlemen with axes to grind. The real "British Subjects' *Chah-jan*" or tea-drinking was by the side of a canal 3 miles from the Kashgar Gate of the city. Here we found about a hundred people, representing thirteen or fourteen different races, awaiting us, Hindus and Muslims, Punjabis and Afghans, Kashmiris and Sindhis and Chitralis, and even one Armenian, a most respectable gentleman in a Homburg hat!

Among them was a charming, youngish, rather shy, obviously intelligent and well-educated Yarkandi called Murad Qari, to whom I have already taken a liking; he is the son by a Turki mother of a famous former British Aqsaqal, Khan Bahadur Mulla Sabit. We all partook of tea and the usual fruits of the earth in large quantities, and then, after a suitable speech in my best Persian, a remarkable procession formed up for the march into Yarkand. Except for some of the fatter Hindu *bunnias* (traders) who came in Chinese carts, all the British subjects were mounted, the poorer ones on donkeys and the rest on horses, and some of the steeds borrowed for the occasion were barely manageable. I was not surprised, therefore, when our Head Clerk, Nasir, begged me in a stage whisper to refrain from exceeding the pace of a slow trot, because once when a Consul-General had cantered on such an occasion half the horses bolted and several loyal British subjects bit the dust! Accordingly D. and I set a safe pace and though, even so, miniature cavalry charges threatened occasionally to engulf us from the rear, no unseemly contretemps occurred as we "processed," smothered in dust, for two miles along the dusty willow-fringed highway. The first sign of further excitements was a parade of what, in the distance, we at first took for the Chinese army but found on closer inspection to be a row of beggars in conical hats with sheepskin rims and almost incredibly filthy rags. These greeted us not only with wailing invocations of Allah and cries of *Padshah! Zakat!* (Alms, O King!) but with a fusillade of Chinese crackers which very nearly caused a stampede of the entire cavalcade. A little further on we rounded a corner and came upon the real Sinkiang Army, cavalry and infantry, whose buglers set up a wild fanfare; uniformed aides-de-camp and black-coated Chinese secretaries met us bowing with their masters' red-paper visiting cards and next moment, dismounted, we found ourselves shaking the limp unaccustomed hands of the local hierarchy. These included the Magistrate of Yarkand, an alert and intelligent Cantonese; the Commandant of the Garrison, an ancient Yunnanese General in a cream-coloured silk shirt, with a head, as D. puts it, positively waggley with age; a speechless Captain in a tightly-buttoned greatcoat, and one or two Assistant Magistrates in skull-caps and Chinese civil dress. 000

(From a letter of D.'s dated 29th October, 1922.)

This morning (Sunday) I went to the Mission Church and came back through the bazaars. Some of the types I saw were extraordinary—strange wild-looking men in square fur caps and ragged clothes, with Mongol faces and the eyes of people without minds! Shrivelled old men and women, mere heaps of rags, crawling about the streets. Fat Begs, picturesquely dressed in black tunics and trousers and long boots, with wonderful striped coats over all. Veiled visions with little fur-edged velvet caps, old Chinese men with brown walnut faces, and terrific Chinese babies like small lumps of dough. What it will be like on market day I can't imagine, for I am told most extraordinary types come in from the deserts and marshes round Yarkand. 142 291

Yarkand, 5th November, 1922.

Yarkand is a much larger but less effectively-situated city than Kashgar. It is all on the flat, and there is no river across which, as at Kashgar, you can obtain a *coup d'œil* of the town and its walls. All you can see from outside at any one point is a section of the massive ramparts, in good repair round the New City but somewhat dilapidated round the adjacent old town; suburbs with long straggling bazaars further confuse the view. Once inside the walls, however, you are struck by the size and spaciousness of the long roofed bazaars, far better-built than those of Kashgar, and by the quaint "bits" and picturesque corners at every turn, of which glimpses are caught through every second doorway; courtyards of humble dwellings, inns, corners by ponds with tumbledown wooden houses and weeping willows drooping over them, eating-shops and groceries, smithies and old-clothes shops and carpenter's shops, and everywhere masses of picturesquely-garbed people. The most remarkable sights in the streets are the beggars, positive miracles of grotesque raggedness and boniness. But Yarkand, though delightful at this season, must be hot and unhealthy from June to October; there are many flies and mosquitoes about still, and malaria (not a bad kind, however) is rife. The universal cretinism is distressing; every fourth person one meets has goitre. This is undoubtedly due to the bad water drunk by the people; although two large rivers come out of the mountains quite close to the city, the Yarkand and the Tiznaf, no attempt has ever been made to bring their waters regularly to the 361 [736] [136] 312

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

312 town by canals, and the water-supply of Yarkand consists solely of the scores of semi-stagnant ponds dotted all over the city. These are filled up but once a year when the Yarkand river is in flood and they can be replenished with the overflow from the irrigated fields outside the walls; they do not look as if they were ever cleaned out from century to century, though I suppose they must be occasionally.

The countryside round Yarkand is delightful, though perfectly flat
361 and not broken up by streams with high loess bluffs as in the Kashgar oasis. The farmsteads, mills, wayside shrines and village bazaars
[34] are built almost entirely of wood, but the houses and barns are not flimsy card-house affairs like their counterparts in the Kashmir Valley; they are solid, comfortable-looking and satisfactory, like old English
[231] farmsteads. Everything is old, long-established, peaceful and prosperous; the well-timbered countryside with its broad fields, brimming canals and farms teeming with cattle, horses, sheep, goats, donkeys, poultry and rosy-cheeked children suggests a kind of Asiatic Holland.

Yarkand is if possible even more "Central Asian" and remote
162 than Kashgar, owing to its greater distance from the Russian frontier and therefore from Europe and "civilization," and an even more astonishing diversity of races is represented in the streets, including the following: Andijanis (Mussulman Russian subjects from Ferghana); Badakhshis (from Afghan Badakhshan); Baltis (from the southern valleys of the Karakoram); Bokharans; Chinese; Chitralis; Dulanis (aboriginals from the Yarkand River valley); Gilgitis (mostly freed slaves or their children); Kanjutis (men of Hunza and Nagar); Kashmiris; Kirghiz; Ladakhis (from Little Tibet); Pathans, Afghan and British; Punjabi Hindus; Punjabi Mussulmans; Shighnis (from Roshan and Shighnan, Upper Oxus); Sindhis (moneylenders from Shikarpur); Tajiks (from the Chinese Pamirs); Tungans (Chinese Muhammadans from N. Sinkiang and Kansu); Turkis; Wakhis (from Wakhan and the valleys of the Hindu Kush).

Of these the Turkis form the great bulk of the population; the Chinese are comparatively few, and are confined to the officials and their hangers-on, a few Tientsin merchants and some petty shopkeepers; the Tungans are mostly traders; Kirghiz and Tajiks come in from the mountains and Dulanis from the down-river marshes. All these are Chinese nationals; the rest are "travellers" or "men from over the mountains" (*dawan-āshti*) *i.e.*, foreigners, of whom the Andijani and Bokharan Russian subjects are represented *vis-à-vis* the Chinese by their own headman or *Aqsaqal*, while the Badakhshis, Baltis, Chitralis, Gilgitis, Kanjutis, Kashmiris, Ladakhis, Pathans, Punjabi Hindus and Muhammadans, and Sindhis look to the British Aqsaqal and his *naibs* or assistants for each community.

Posgam, 11th November, 1922.

000 We have at last escaped from Yarkand and are bound for the ancient Kingdom of Khotan. Our caravan now consists of the tarantass and four Chinese carts drawn by two horses each (except on marches where the road is heavy with sand, when one or more extra horses are engaged for each cart at a shilling a day each). The hire fixed for each two-horse cart was 20 Kashgar taels or about £3 for the journey to Khotan. The tarantass with our own horses in it we

000 use in the same way as the Persian traveller uses his fastest mule; on this animal, called the *abdari* mule, he puts his bedding, his prayer-carpet, his samovar and cups, his water-jug, some food and his personal servant. This is a good plan, for it minimizes the discomfort of arriving at a cheerless *manzil* (stage) long before one's caravan.

No less than four different farewell tea-drinkings at various points along the road leading out of Yarkand delayed our final departure till nearly midday. Two hours' trot-and-canter through a perfectly flat country of wide fields, heavy timber, canals and prosperous-looking farms brought us to the house of a wealthy British subject of Chitral extraction who had a complicated dispute concerning rights of way and water with his next-door neighbour, a Kashmiri colonist. After toying for a while with various dishes and sipping tea, D. went in to see the ladies of the house and I sallied forth with the parties and went over the points in dispute with them on the spot. When I thought that the incessant cross-fire of argument and vociferation from both sides (so like the Indian and so unlike the easy-going Turki) had continued long enough I cut it short by firmly framing issues and referring them to a more or less unwilling committee of greybeards with strict injunctions to submit their decisions on my return from Keriya. No one will be more surprised than myself if well-thought-out replies on all issues are handed in to me by the arbitrators in due course; my hope merely is that the greybeards in question will succeed in bringing about a reconciliation between the parties and thus free themselves from the responsibility of deciding on my issues.

133 A few miles further on we came to the Yarkand or (as it is called lower down) Tarim River, an interesting stream. Its upper reaches drain some of the most difficult country in the world, the untrodden solitudes of Oprang and the terrible Raskam gorges on the north side of the main Karakoram range; then for a thousand miles it forces its way through the dread Takla Makan Desert, only to lose itself at last in the lakes and marshes of Lop Nor, last remnant of what was once a great Central Asian Sea. In November the various channels can be forded easily on horseback; but the volume both of water and of traffic in summer is shown by the number of large, clumsy ferry-boats one sees pulled up on the beach on both sides of the two main channels.

631 Posgam is a new district which has been carved out of the unwieldy Karghalik charge and placed under a Magistrate of the third class. A Yamen and fine new bazaars are being built of timber by the Chinese to the east of the village. This is only one of several new districts, the formation of which has been necessitated by the increase of population and the spread of cultivation during the last thirty years.

Karghalik, 13th November, 1922.

704 We had a remarkable experience yesterday when two squadrons of cavalry turned out in force to escort us into this town. One of
533 them with its band and numerous banners marched in front of us, and the other with its band and even more banners brought up the rear. The bands both played at the same time, but their repertoire being limited they filled in the gaps by playing scales on their trumpets against one another. Just as the rear band was starting with its

704 533 lowest note, like the dying moo of ten thousand stricken kine, the one in front would be finishing with its highest, which resembled a similar number of nails being drawn across a gigantic pane of glass. Each note went on for about two minutes, in an irregular diminuendo and crescendo as the various trumpeters lost their breaths and found them again. We have christened this performance "Ma noises" after the gallant Commandant, Captain Mā, a son-in-law of the Titai.

704 Apart from the dust they raise and the excruciating sounds they emit, the Karghalik Cavalry and their band are a pure joy. Yesterday as we rode past the guard of honour the *beau sabreur* in command gave us the "officer's salute" with the utmost smartness. I was much impressed and rode past wreathed in smiles, my hat raised with due civilian humility. The effect, however, was somewhat spoilt when, the officer's charger becoming restive, he whacked it soundly on the quarters with the flat of his sword several times before returning to the correct position! On another occasion, coming suddenly round a corner upon the cavalry, we caught the "Ma noise" merchant who led the band napping without his trumpet. Frantic shouting and hurrying to and fro, and all seemed lost, until the small street-boy who had been practising with the trumpet across the road dashed over and handed it to its rightful owner, who blew his first ear-splitting C just in time to make our horses shy as we passed. The situation was saved!

The presence of so many mounted troops here must have something to do with the fact that the grazing in the mountains above Karghalik is very good and it is a great horse-producing country, witness the thousands of ponies working on the Leh route which are owned by Karghalik carriers. The Amban here is a Manchu, the only Magistrate of that redoubtable race we have in Kashgaria; one notices at once the difference in type, the upper part of his face being almost like a European's, not flat like that of a Chinese.

Karghalik, 15th November.

000 The dinner with which we were entertained to-day at the Yamen was unique in that three Chinese ladies were present, including our Manchu host's wife, next whom I sat just as if she had been a "foreign devil" like myself. It was most interesting. The ladies were shy at first, but when D. and our Chinese secretary had succeeded in putting them at their ease they thoroughly entered into the joke and the party went very well. There were also some children present, one of whom, a girl of ten, was as pretty as a picture, and knew it; sad to say, she was painted up to the eyes. An amusing interlude was when an old and battered tin of asparagus was produced and our host asked me to read him the instructions. He explained that it had been given him by a former English traveller who had dined with him, but he had not been able to have it for dinner as no one in his household could read the instructions. We are now wondering how long it will be before symptoms of botulism appear.

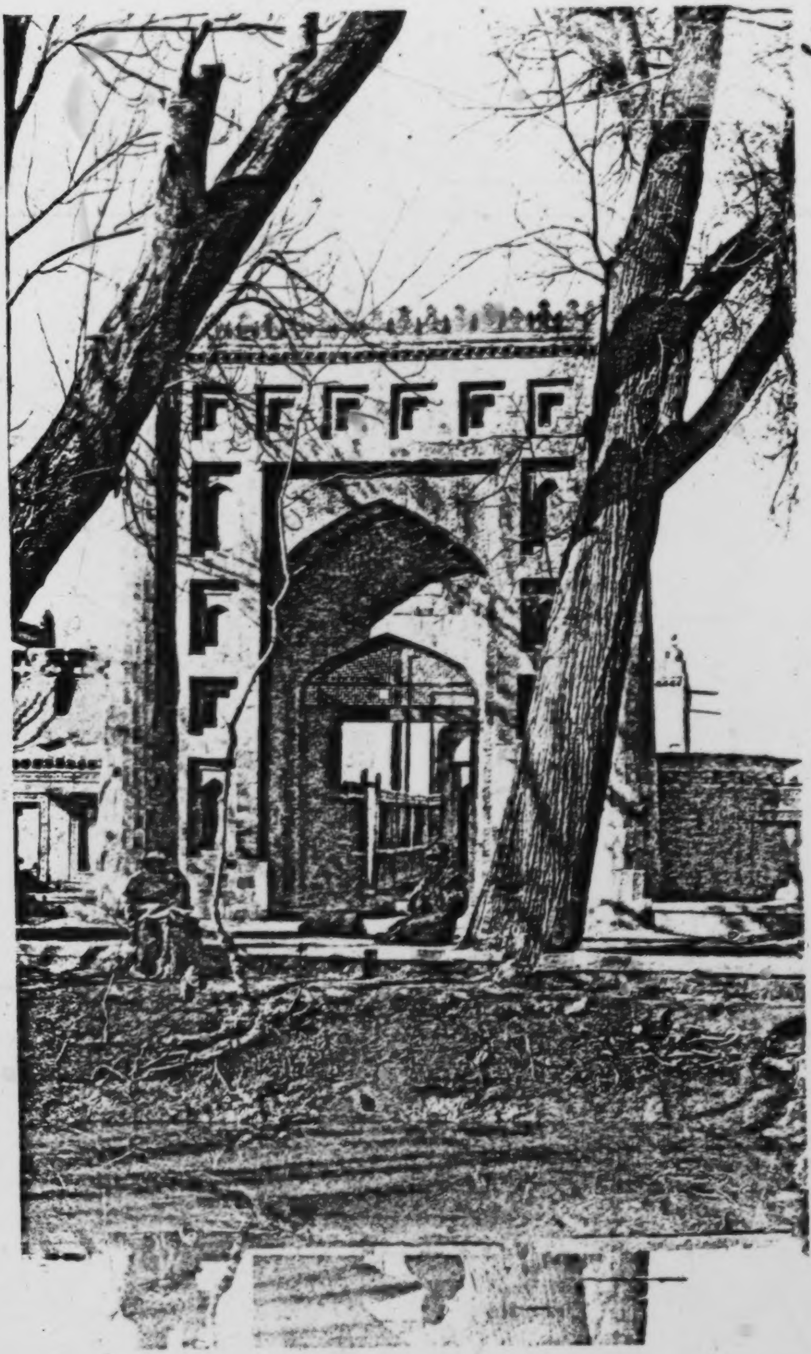
Goma, 18th November.

Owing to the extreme knottiness of the points raised by the Amban, I had to extend our stay at Karghalik from three days to six; this

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

[Face p.108]

34b



IN THE SHRINE OF HAZRAT PIR, YARKAND; GATEWAY OF MOSQUE SCHOOL.

necessitated a double march of 35 miles to Chulak Langar, mostly over 000 desert. To make matters worse the Amban, whose private amiability was as excessive as his official stubbornness, insisted on our *dining* with him at 8.30 a.m. on the day of our departure, a most trying business. What with this and the various farewell tea-drinkings we did not finally escape from the Karghalik neighbourhood till past noon. D. rode with me for eighteen miles, and then we packed her with a mattress and plenty of bedding from our valises in the tarantass. Sunset, and with it an icy wind from the desert, found us still twelve miles from the lonely rest-house for which we were bound. This last lap was the heaviest going of all; the tired horses were unable to drag the tarantass at more than about three miles an hour, and time after time I had to help the two orderlies to push it out of a sand-dune, thankful for the exercise which kept me warm. We were both dead tired when at last, at 9 o'clock of a freezing starlit night, we pulled into the big stone *serai* constructed in the sixties by that public-spirited tyrant, Yakub Beg "Bedaulat." Chulak Langar is situated at one of the coldest points on the whole Khotan road; standing on a slight rise facing the desert, its very name commemorates a tragedy of cold; *chulak* means "lame," and refers to a poor man who stumbled into the *serai* many years ago with his arms and legs frost-bitten and remained there a beggar until he died. To the south, the rolling gravel hills stretch away up to the blue snow-capped Kunlun; after heavy rain, and when the snows melt in the early summer, a trickle of water comes down a little valley and replenishes the big square reservoir from which the inn draws its water. In the valley are also a few poor little fields and some acres of grazing belonging to the innkeeper. To the north in the clear dawn the view is inexpressibly awe-inspiring and sinister; the yellow dunes of the Takla Makan, like the giant waves of a petrified ocean, extend in countless myriads to a far horizon with here and there an extra large sand-hill, a king-dune as it were, towering above his fellows. They seem to clamour silently, those dunes, for travellers to engulf, for whole caravans to swallow up as they have swallowed up so many in the past.

19th November.

Goma is a thriving little town of wooden houses surrounded by 289 orchards and groves of mulberry. A flourishing local industry is the making of coarse paper from pulped mulberry-bark—a link with the past indeed, for the process is much the same as that by which the Chinese made paper towards the beginning of the Christian era. Another link with the past, of a different kind, was a debtor I saw 681 this morning in the Yamen wearing a "cangue" (Turki *shal*) or heavy square yoke of wood padlocked round his neck. This ancient Chinese method of making debtors pay has long been officially abolished both in China Proper and in Sinkiang, but it evidently survives in out-of-the-way places; the cangues, I am told, vary in weight from 20 to 60 lb. or more, and are left on the neck of the debtor until he pays up. He can move about as he likes inside the Yamen precincts, but has to be fed by his relations as he cannot reach his own mouth.

Goma is on the very verge of the Takla Makan, of which we had such an impressive glimpse from Chulak Langar. It is a great place 000

172 It[1] is a great place for the treasure-seekers, known as "Taklamakanchis," who are to be found all along the fringe of the great desert; ragged, ever-hopeful men of the tramp type who spend their lives ransacking the remains of ancient Buddhist tombs and temples far out among the sands of the Takla Makan. Occasionally these men find a few coins or seals or flakes of gold-leaf used in decoration; but I never heard of any one of them becoming rich in the process. From the archæological point of view, the activities of the ubiquitous Taklamakanchis cut both ways; Stein acknowledges many debts to them, including assistance, direct or indirect, in the discovery of his chief sites; but he had far oftener to deplore the damage done by them to tombs and temples, stupas and dwelling-houses.

Zawa, 23rd November, 1922.

134 We are no longer in "Kashgaria" now; we are in the ancient land of Khotan, the "Kingdom of Jade." There is a distinct edge-of-the-desert feel about the countryside, fertile and closely-cultivated though it is. You notice it first when you come to Goma after the long desert stretch from Karghalik. You are getting further east; the great Takla Makan on your left hand is nearly at its broadest; the Kunlun on your right is an arid range. Now and again, quite unexpectedly, you come upon a belt of desert or a village islanded in sand; for here, as in Kansu far to the east, the inexorable "Gobi"—the word means merely "desert"—is encroaching from the north-west, pushing the thin line of cultivation back against the fifteen-hundred mile-long wall of Tibet. One whole village we passed was in its death-throes; a spear-head of dunes from the north had pinned it against the barren foothills, and all the houses had been abandoned except two or three to which the owners still clung pathetically though the sand was heaped right up to the roof. The loess soil in these parts, though apparently no less prolific when watered, is lighter both in weight and in colour than the yellow loess of Kashgar. The climate 342 is evidently warmer, as one would expect, for the houses of the poor are all of wattles plastered with mud, unlike the solid mud-brick structures of the Kashgar oasis. The people too are more vivacious 181 and excitable, as befits the south; one notices it at once in the small boys, whose enterprise and cheekiness in pursuit of a *tamasha* (*e.g.* a foreign traveller and his wife) has to be seen to be believed. The 825 inhabitants of the southern oases are great pigeon-lovers. Outside every farm-house you will see tall poles with cross-poles at the top and rows of fat pigeons roosting on them at sunset. If you sprinkle grain on the sand at the *Kaptar Mazar* or Pigeon Shrine of Qumrabat Padshahim (literally, My King's Castle in the Sand) in the desert between Goma and Khotan, thousands of pigeons will stream out to meet you, a sort of Milky Way of pigeons, and the sound of their cooing and of their myriad wings is like the sea.

Khotan, 24th November, 1922.

000 This afternoon, eight miles from Khotan, we stopped at an ornate building opening off the bazaar of a small town. The masons were still at work and a stone-carver was chiselling away at a lengthy inscription in Turki on the outer face of the gateway. The legend

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[1] [i.e., Goma on the Takla Makan - Analyst]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

told us that Great Old Father Ch'en, who had been for six years 000 Magistrate of Khotan, was responsible for the edifice—a kind of mausoleum of his official ambitions. The inscription told of the mighty deeds of Ch'en, how he had built schools and temples and repaired roads, how he had girdled Khotan New City with walls and acted justly in the sight of men. Finally the names were given of those who had sent petitions to Urumchi praying for the retention at Khotan of the said Great Old Father. Within the building as we sat drinking ceremonial tea provided by our absent host in a room decorated with pleasing frescoes, Chu translated to us a Chinese poem which adorned one of the walls. It told how a certain Emperor of the T'ang Dynasty summoned his Prime Minister, one Hsü, and said to him, "Hsü, thou art the most faithful and the most honoured of my counsellors, yet there are men who speak ill of thee, and complaints have reached mine ears. How is this?" Hsü prostrated himself and replied (but in far more flowery terms), "Sire, the floods of spring are welcome to the farmers, but travellers speak many hard words of them; the moon of autumn is loved of lovers, but robbers like her not." The Emperor, understanding, bade his minister arise, and Hsü basked once more in the full radiance of the Imperial countenance.

I am told that Ch'en was a strong and severe Magistrate; he had a habit, among others, of hamstringing thieves which resulted, towards the end of his time, in the almost complete boycott of Khotan by the light-fingered fraternity. Officials of this type are unpopular the world over, not least among the very classes whose property they protect. Town walls, again, are not appreciated by the inhabitants of Sinkiang as they ought to be, owing to the fact that forced labour is used exclusively in their construction; they are in fact "public works" in the fullest sense, in that the public has to work, and work hard, to make them. One can guess that complaints began to reach the ears of the Governor at Urumchi and eventually resulted in the replacement of Ch'en, who has doubtless ever since regarded himself as the victim of intrigue—hence the little story which adorns the walls of his drawing-room.

Khotan, 25th November, 1922.

Khotan is not a large town, but it is busy and prosperous and 361 makes the most of itself to the traveller. You come first to the "New" or Chinese city, which is square and measures about half a mile each way with massive walls in good repair and bastions crowned with pagodas along them. Here are the Yamens of the officials, the barracks and magazine, the Taoist temple and several streets of shops. Then, passing under a gateway in the walls in the middle of the main bazaar, you find yourself in the Old City, which, unlike Kashgar and Yarkand, consists of one long, winding, up-and-down bazaar, well-roofed throughout, with an irregular fringe of town on either side all mixed up with private gardens, mosques, cornfields, open market-places and cemeteries. Old Badruddin's house where we are staying 343 is right in the middle of the most crowded part of the bazaar, and yet you can escape through the orchard into a lane among cornfields leading into the open country. I am ensconced in a grand room looking on to the garden, with numerous real glass windows and shutters to them, a fireplace and a Russian stove as well. D. chose

343 a cosier and more private apartment; she has but one lattice window, but that looks down on to the roof of a carpenter's house, on which the women sit spinning and sewing in the sun all day long; cocks and hens peck about amid heaps of shavings, and children clad in long boots, greatcoat and nothing else peep over the edge into the street, tumble down the ladder into the shop and otherwise enjoy themselves without anyone minding. Children are cheap in this fat, easy-going land.

Khotan, 27th November, 1922.

.574 We have just returned (8 p.m.) from an interesting but arctic dinner-party at the Yamen. Our hosts, the Amban and Commandant, had arranged a theatrical performance for the occasion, a great honour. D. and I were met within the Yamen by two parallel processions headed by our hosts and their wives respectively; I was led with much ceremony to one dinner-table and D. to another separated from the men by a low partition. The travelling company's stage was set in the open courtyard opposite us.

353 The prevailing note of the decorations was red; the walls of the Yamen building behind were covered with fine scarlet embroidery and scrolls of the same colour inscribed with Chinese characters in gold; under-foot were red Khotan carpets, while from the roof of the portico and the branches of the trees in the courtyard hung scores of red Chinese lanterns. Most of the latter were of paper, but several of them were of the beautiful and fantastic hexagonal pattern with panels of embroidered silk and long coloured tassels. Major Ma told me that most of the embroidery had been done by Turki women in Khotan, but he hastened to add that the Khotanis had learnt embroidery from the Chinese.

574 The dinner lasted some four hours, and the theatrical performance went on all the time.[1] After sunset the temperature sank to several degrees below freezing-point, and I nearly froze to death. The Chinese never mind how cold it is, for their winter clothes and boots, lined with fur throughout, are as admirably designed to withstand cold as their summer costume is to keep its wearers cool. D. says she was better off, thanks to large braziers which were kept under the table well stoked with wood-embers. [291] She was charmed with the little Chinese ladies, who wore the regulation black satin tunic and trousers and their hair scraped back and twisted into small buns lavishly decorated with ornaments of jade and precious stones. By far the loveliest of her hostesses, however, was a Turki girl from the Titai's household at Kashgar, who was married to one of the military officers. She had, according to D.—I missed this vision—a perfect profile and small oval face, a complexion like a wild rose and large limpid dark eyes; her voice, like those of the beauties of Kashgar, had a kind of uneven tone with long, full, liquid notes.

The ex-Amban's mother, with whom D. exchanged calls yesterday, was not at the dinner. She, according to D., might have stepped straight out of a fairy-story. She looks about a hundred and fifty, wears a black silk handkerchief tied round her head like a pirate, and owns an enormous woolly black cat which adores her and sits all the time licking her hands and face.

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[1] For a description of a Chinese theatrical performance, see pp. 245–7.

Khotan, 28th November.

The name of Stein is well remembered in these parts among Turkis 000 and British subjects alike, and all antiquities other than gold brought in by the "Taklamanchis" or treasure-seekers of the Takla Makan are regarded as his property and to be kept for him. I heard many stories about the great explorer; how in the dreaded Qaranghu Tagh or "Dark Mountains" south of Khotan he bridged an abyss with wire and thus pulled himself and his party across; how in the same mountains he was laid up with frost-bite and would have perished if help had not been obtained from the Leh road, and so on. One episode, probably trivial enough if it occurred, appears to have particularly impressed the Khotanis. It is related that a domed tomb was discovered by Stein completely buried in sand, only one small aperture giving access. This was too small for Stein himself to enter, so he called for volunteers, but none of his local men dared to go in. Finally the Indian surveyor, Ram Singh, stepped (literally) into the breach. He squeezed himself in, and when he came out again some time later **he was blind!**

Our journey from Khotan to Keriya and back was of the 487 nature of a dash on business, and my letters contain little of interest to the general reader. The second time we visited this remote part of the world, in the spring of 1924, we were 484 able to spare some time for seeing the country and studying its people; on this occasion we travelled straight to Keriya (103 miles) in four marches, stayed there three days and returned to Khotan in another four days. We used pony transport for this trip, the desert road being too sandy for carts. We marched the first day 35 miles to a lonely desert inn called Beshtoghraq Langar, or "The Inn of the Five Desert Poplars," passing, twenty miles from Khotan, through the headquarters of the flourishing new district of Lop.

The Inn of the Five Desert Poplars proved a grubby, desolate 361 little collection of mud hovels islanded in the sand-dunes of a belt of desert 25 miles wide; but our next halt, Chira, was a pleasant township positively buried in orchards. At this half-way house between Khotan and Keriya we were met 484 by the British Aqsaqal of the latter district, a charming, courtly Afghan of great local prestige and considerable substance called Ghulam Muhammad, who insisted on our staying in a comfortable house belonging to his Turki wife, a Chira lady. Next day, near Domoko, an amusing and instructive little incident occurred. We were hacking peacefully along 000 with Murad Qari and a couple of orderlies, when we noticed a crowd of people in the fields a couple of hundred yards from the road, and thought we would go and see what was happening.

600 When some of the crowd caught sight of our small party trotting quietly over the fields, to our surprise they turned and ran like rabbits ; the alarm spread, and the next moment the whole crowd was scattering helter-skelter in all directions. Only a few fierce-looking dogs remained to receive us. Qari quickly realized what the matter was and informed us that we had broken up a dog-fighting meet. I sent Hafiz after the fugitives to tell them not to be frightened of us ; gradually they trickled back and soon we were surrounded by a hundred or so sheepish-looking villagers, some of whom led heavily-built crop-eared dogs of the chow type. I thought at first that dog-fighting was forbidden, and that the sportsmen of Domoko had taken us for the arm of the law ; but Qari assured me that this was not the case, and that the bolting of the crowd was due to nothing but pure funk. They saw five strangers riding towards them, and their instinct was to run. No wonder a handful of Chinese with a paper army keep perfect order throughout Kashgaria !

I was particularly anxious while at Keriya to obtain a view and if possible a telepanorama of the western end of the Altun Tagh or Mountains of Gold, a range belonging to the Kunlun system and extending from the south-east of Keriya 800 miles in a north-easterly direction. We were indeed vouchsafed a glimpse of the object of our desires, but a tantalizingly premature and inadequate one. In the late afternoon of the 30th November, on the road between Domoko and Qarakir Langar, we caught our breaths at the distant vision of two mighty peaks of the Mountains of Gold, both over 21,000 feet high, 65 miles away over the desert ; but the next morning the fatal dust-haze which is far worse here even than at Kashgar had blotted them out, and we did not see them again.

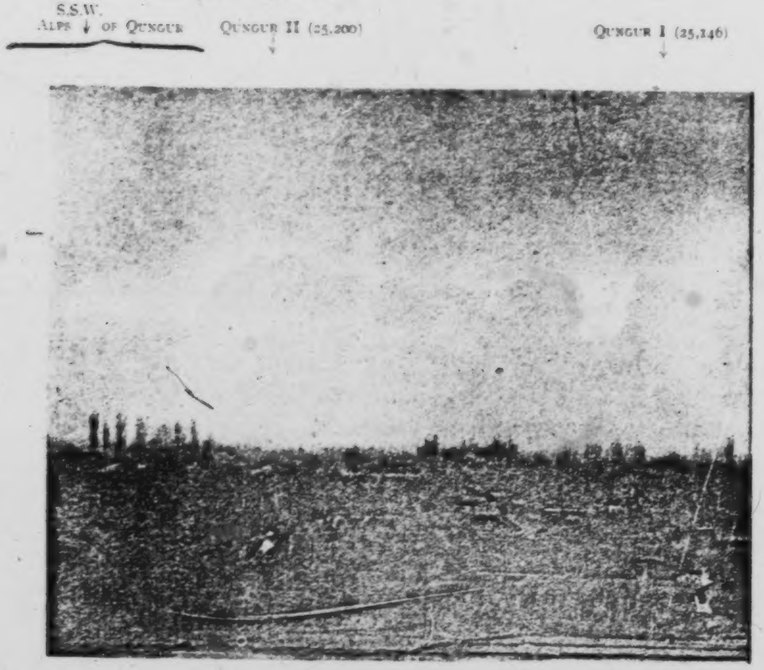
133 A peculiarity of the Keriya district outside the cultivated area is the coarse grass which covers the country for hundre[illegible]
312 of square miles. As there is practically no rainfall at all in this part of the world, these savannahs must be due to comparatively plentiful subsoil water percolating from the distant Kunlun. Chira and Gulakhma and other oases on the road to Keriya owe their existence to this water, which appears in frequent springs after an underground passage of forty or fifty miles beneath the belt of absolutely barren desert between the main road and the villages at the foot of the Kunlun.

600 There is an end-of-the-world feeling about Keriya which

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

133

PANORAMA FROM NEAR CHĀT, UPPER QARATASH
Elevation 12,500 feet


S.S.W.
ALPS ↓ OF QUNGUR
QUNGUR II (25,200)
QUNGUR I (25,146)

TELEPANORAMA OF KASHGAR RANGE FROM 1 MILE S.W. OF KASH
Elevation *circ.* 4,300 feet. Distance 58-66 miles

[Face p. 116 A]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

123

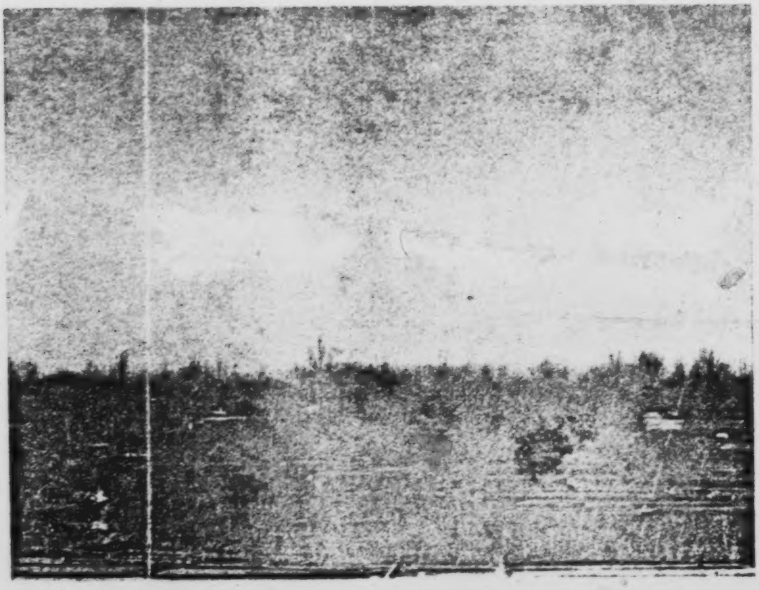
Muz Tagh Ata (under cloud)

Upper Qaratash Valley

ATASH

NGUR I (25,146)

Chai

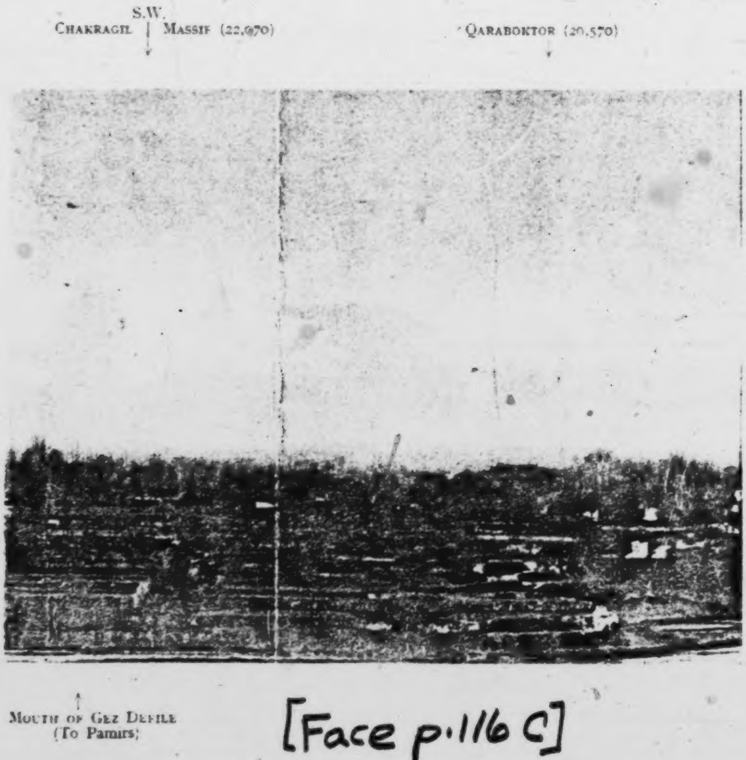


.W. OF KASHGAR OLD CITY

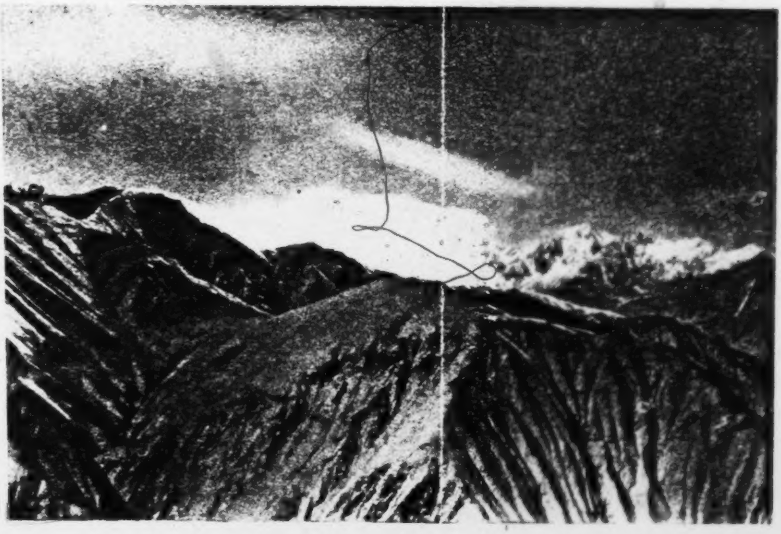
Mouth of
(To

[Face p. 116 B]

W.

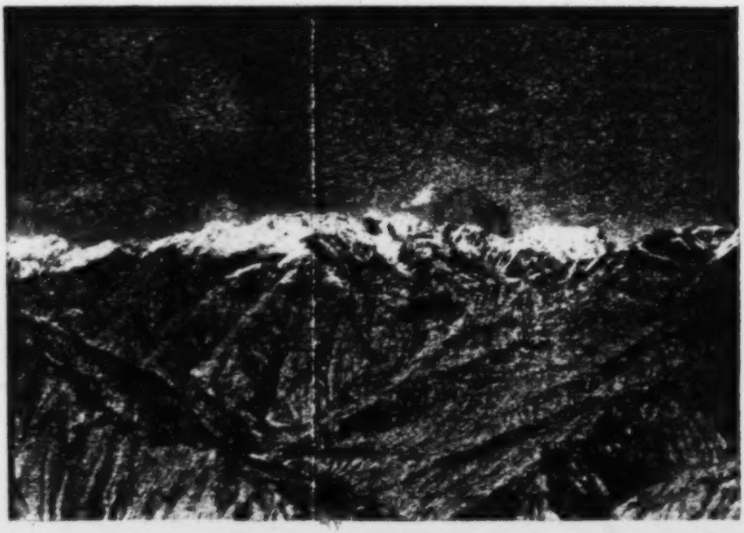

S.W.
CHAKRAGIL | MASSIF (22,070)
QARABOKTOR (20,570)
MOUTH OF GEZ DEFILE
(To Pamirs)

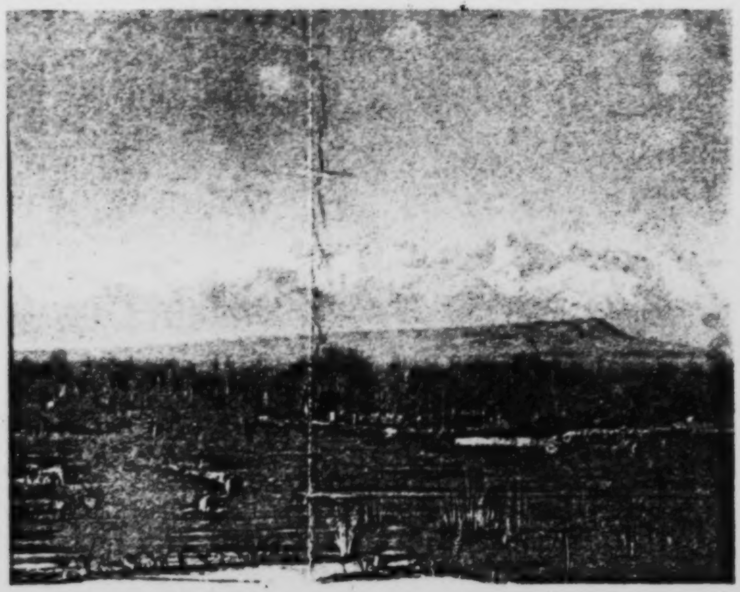
[Face p.116 C]


Qungur II (25,200
Shiwakil Group

Ulugh Art P. (16,610)
W.

[Face p. 116 D]


GROUP
N.W.
CHIMGHAN RANGE
JUNCTION OF CHIMGHAN AND QARATASH RS.
JUNCTION OF GHIJAQ AND QARATASH RS.


510)
W.S.W.
BOSTAN TEREK MTS. (18,560)

[Face p. 116 E]

000 487 is quite distinctive. Most of the other small towns in Kashgaria are on main routes, and witness a continual flow of through traffic ; they have at least two roadside tea-drinking pavilions, one on each side of the town. Keriya on the other hand is almost, though not quite, a *cul de sac ;* it is the *Ultima Thule* of Kashgaria in this direction. With the exception of the insignificant desert settlements of Niya, Charchan and Charkhliq, there is nothing but desert for 860 miles between Keriya and Tunhwang (Shachow), the westernmost town of Kansu province. The journey to Tunhwang, or Dukhan as the Turkis call it, is only practicable in winter when water can be carried by camels in the form of ice across the terrible Lop desert, which occupies most of the 450 miles between Charkhliq and Tunhwang and includes 150 miles of the salt-encrusted bed of the ancient Lop Sea. Occasionally, perhaps twice a year, a camel-caravan brings silks, tea and porcelain from China Proper to Khotan and Yarkand by this route, and returns with Khotan carpets, jade and Kashgar cotton cloth ; individual traders pass to and fro between Keriya and Charchan, but on the whole it may be said that regular traffic stops at Keriya. A fine road leads into the town from the west, with an exceptionally good reception pavilion by its side ; to the east, a mere country lane leads to the farms on the left bank of the Keriya River, and beyond them degenerates into a narrow track across the savannah. On this side there is no reception pavilion ; no official, foreign guest or other visitor worthy of a tea-drinking ever comes to Keriya from the east.

000 While in Keriya we stayed at the Aqsaqal's comfortable house in the middle of the town. My work with the Amban left little time for sight-seeing. Judging by the behaviour of the inhabitants, indeed, the chief sight to be seen in Keriya while we were there was ourselves. One soon becomes accustomed to gaping crowds of onlookers in the remoter parts of Central Asia ; but the curiosity of the Kerialiks passed all bounds. The place appeared to kave knocked off work for the duration of our visit and to be engaged in nothing but looking at us ; or rather I should say at D., for she drew ten times as good " gates " as I did. It must be remembered that with the notable exception of Mrs. Littledale in the nineties no European lady had ever been within a hundred miles of Keriya before. The inhabitants in crowds followed our every step, in the town and out of it ; so that we, who objected to being butchered to make a Keriya holiday, stayed at home.

000 Ever hopeful, the populace took up positions on the surrounding roofs, waiting for us to show our noses outside. It is absurd to complain of the "bad manners" of the inhabitants, as some travellers do in similar circumstances; their curiosity is perfectly natural, and must be put up with. What Londoner would not stare, if he saw a Keriya Beg strolling down Piccadilly in full costume with an eagle on his wrist and the ladies of his harem following him at a respectful distance?

Winter was now upon us, and I was far behind my original tour-programme. Leaving Keriya on 5th December, we accomplished the return journey to Kashgar with almost undignified rapidity under the stimulus of icy winds from the desert. In spite of halts of two days at Khotan, three at Karghalik and four at Yarkand we were back in the Consulate by 27th December, in time to give belated Christmas parties and the official New Year dinner. Except for pilgrimages to two of Sir Aurel Stein's sites, at Khadalik near Domoko and Yotkan, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Khotan, we had little time for anything but travelling and official business. 485 As on the outward journey, we slept each night either (at the larger centres) in private houses, or in the Chinese timber-and-mud-brick rest-houses reserved for officials. Whereas the native *serais* are often very dirty, these *langars* are usually fairly clean, though bare and dusty, as they are seldom used. The buildings generally consist of a gateway of the Chinese type, with a wall built across the front to keep the devils out, and a courtyard on three sides of which are servants' quarters, kitchen, store-rooms and stables, while on the fourth, opposite the gate, are the *chambres de maître*. These are either three or five in number and open into one another, all except the middle one being provided with fire-places. Their windows are not glazed, but consist of light wooden lattice-work frames pasted over with white mulberry-bark paper.

000 The day we double-marched from Karghalik to Yarkand was one of the most strenuous I have ever spent. D. started with the caravan at nine, in the tarantass, while I proceeded to the Yamen, intending to finish off my business with the Amban in two or three hours and catch D. up in time for lunch somewhere about Posgam. Alas for my optimistic programme! I might have known my Manchu Amban. So many and knotty were the points he raised as a *bonne bouche* to our lively and prolonged discussions, and so loath was he (so he said) to part with me, that although I parried all his attempts to keep me

for dinner I did not finally escape from Karghalik till 3 p.m. 000
I was then faced with a 41-mile ride to Yarkand, including all the ceremonies involved in arriving at and departing from the town of Posgam as well as an hour or two's work with the Amban of that district. Attended only by Hafiz on his sturdy Kalmuck pony I called upon the black horse to rise to the occasion and galloped practically the whole way to Posgam (24 miles) in 2½ hours. At the British Subjects' tea-drinking, a mile short of Posgam, the poor old Aqsaqal and his friends had been waiting for me ever since noon, so I had to give them a good innings and hear all they had to say about their various lawsuits and other business. It was pitch-dark when I mounted again and trotted on into Posgam, and in view of this and of the gallop he had just done the black horse may perhaps be forgiven for coming down on a perfectly smooth bit of road and throwing me on my left shoulder rather heavily. The Amban, I was thankful to find, had abandoned the idea of a road-side reception hours before, and awaited me in his yamen; he was more considerate than my Manchu friend of Karghalik, and compliments, small talk, business and farewells were all successfully packed into an hour.

By seven o'clock I was again on the road, riding my other horse which had been waiting for me all day at Posgam. I had hoped to be able to trot and canter all the way into Yarkand (17 miles), but my shoulder, which had been wrenched by my fall, was somewhat painful and would not stand jogging, so I had to proceed the whole way at a walk. A hospitable British subject called Haji Turab Shah was ready for me at his house, a mile out of Posgam, with a good square meal for which I was extremely thankful. Crossing the Yarkand 491
River a mile beyond this was strange experience. I was surprised to find that there was considerably more water than when we had forded this river early in November, and that some of the ferry-boats which had then been laid by were now again in use. I was told that this was due to the fact 3/2
that in November the water of the river can still be drawn off for irrigation, and is used for flooding the fields which have been sown for next spring's crop; later, when the hard frost comes to the plains, the sluices of the canals become blocked with ice and it is no longer possible to draw off the waters of the river. I was escorted by the Aqsaqal of Posgam and two of 491
his men, one of my own orderlies, and four of the Amban of Posgam's runners, who dangled at the end of poles monstrous

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

491

red paper lanterns inscribed with strange characters. With our five horses we occupied the whole of the big flat-bottomed ferry-boats, in which we were poled across the two main channels of the river by morose ferrymen in enormous sheepskin hats. It was a wild dark night, no stars, no moon; by the light of a yellowish glow from behind heavy clouds in the western sky we could see, spinning past us in endless procession on the swift but shallow flood, floes and fragments of ice, which glanced harmlessly off our sides as the ferrymen kept the bows of the boat up-stream. The dim glow in the west, the fantastic lanterns, the strange-hatted ferrymen, the horses whinnying nervously in the bows and stern of the barge and the swift procession of the ice-floes on the dark waters, combined to produce an effect of unreality; we seemed to be crossing some river of Hades in company with a boat-load of lost souls.

The remaining 15 miles into Yarkand were very long. What with the darkness and my painful shoulder we could not hurry, and it was midnight before we at last turned wearily into the courtyard of the house at Yarkand in which D. had been anxiously awaiting me since sunset.

Our Christmas lunch on the road between Yarkand and Kashgar was one of the chilliest meals I have ever eaten. Dismounting at a ruined farm-house we collected some fragments of green thorn-bush and tried with only partial success to make a fire behind a wall. When we came to "lay the table," we found that our drinking-water (not that we wanted to drink much) was frozen in the thermos, the hard-boiled eggs were also hard-frozen (D. thought the first one she broke was bad and threw it away), the cold chicken emitted a ringing sound when tapped and the juicy Kucha pears had to be thawed before we could get our teeth into them!

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER IX

DESERT, RIVER AND MOUNTAIN

ABOUT the tenth of February the grip of frost upon 132 the land began to relax noticeably, the surface of the ice on the skating-ponds became day by day more slushy and the sun's rays developed a hitting power which surprised us so early in the season. A fortnight later, amid general jubilation, the first muddy water appeared in the irrigation-channels, forerunner of the life-giving floods which in another two months would be sweeping down from the great ranges. Kashgar awoke and stretched itself after its winter sleep. All at once, it seemed, the poplars and willows put out their buds, the soil became soft and moist and the garden resounded with the chatter of starlings, the twitter of martens, the cooing of ring-doves and the hoo-hoo-hoo of the courting hoopoe. Spring was upon us, and at the Consulate our fancy lightly turned to thoughts of the Road. We planned a most attractive ten weeks' tour which would take us first to Merket, on the Yarkand River four marches to the east, thence down-river to Maralbashi and to fair Aqsu, 300 miles along the ancient Silk Road from Europe to Cathay, and back by Uch Turfan and the Mountains of Heaven. In the event, this programme had to be postponed to the autumn, except as regards Merket, but the spring tour that we did manage to carry out, though short, was interesting enough.

Sending our baggage-ponies and all our retinue except the 487 indispensable Hafiz and Sangi Khan ahead the day before, we left Kashgar on 21st March and reached Yupogha, 51 miles east-south-east, the same evening. Our way at first led through a flat country of trees and reedy canals and old farms on the banks of quiet rivers; but the second day the cultivation became gradually more sparse and the country drier as we approached the Takla Makan. That night we slept 346 at a thriving little market-village called Tarim Bazar, where

346 there is the much-frequented shrine of one of Kashgar's many lady-saints, Bu Mariam. It is a simple affair; a grove of ancient desert-poplars, two or three single-storied buildings on a little hill, a tall conical mound of faggots and sand surmounted by a bundle of long poles, and all round in serried ranks the tombs of the Faithful. Escaping with difficulty from the idly curious of Tarim Bazar we made tea for ourselves under a scented tamarisk-bush near the shrine. In a corner under the ancient poplars some families of pilgrims from Khotan were encamped with their ponies, donkeys and goats [291] around them like a nomad tribe on the move; an incredibly old beggar in his elaborately-ragged, almost theatrical patchwork costume and mediæval sheepskin-rimmed extinguisher hat doddered about among the graves; and all the while, incongruously, every tree and every bush was loud with the chorus of Spring.

487 Next day we crossed the westernmost and narrowest section of the Takla Makan, 24 miles broad, to the tiny settlement of Langar among the first jungles of the Yarkand River. It was not a pleasant march. Though there were no high dunes to cross, the going was heavy throughout, the sun's heat trying and the endless vistas of tamarisk-cones inexpressibly monotonous. The tarantass had as usual been sent back after our first double march, and we both rode. But the worst was now over. Next morning an exhilarating two-mile canter brought us to the river, across the placid waters of which roomy flat-bottomed ferry-boats were plying to and fro with cargoes of fur-hatted carters, blue-hooded Chinese carts, gaily-decked horses tinkling with bells and villagers in costumes of many colours. Across the river, in a grove of trees from which last year's leaves had not yet fallen (so calm and windless is the winter here), we were met by an unex-
631 pectedly imposing cortège. Twenty horsemen escorted a landau drawn by three fine bays, harnessed troika-fashion and skilfully handled by an obviously Russian-trained Turki coachman. In the carriage sat a good-looking, clean-shaven young Chinese gentleman dressed in the regulation black silk coat and white skirt, and wearing the neat black cap of his country instead of the ridiculous bowler favoured by most of his colleagues. It was the Amban of Maralbashi, of which district Merket is a subdivision, and he was actually on tour—the first and last occasion during the whole of our time in Kashgaria on which we met a District Magistrate away from

his headquarters. Still more surprising, he greeted us in 631
halting but recognizable English, a language which he told us he had learnt as a student at Peking but had since had little opportunity to practise. His Russian, we understood, was much more fluent, as he had been attached for a year to the Chinese Consulate at Irkutsk before the Revolution. Mr. Chiu was one of the few specimens I came across of official Young China in the exile of the Far West; others included Mr. M. Y. Tao, Foreign Affairs Secretary to the Tao Tai, and three different Postmasters of Kashgar. I had had no previous experience of the ex-student class, and I must say I was most favourably impressed with their manners, intelligence and capacity.

Merket, though the centre of a large and growing oasis, 361
is merely a big market-village nestling under the lee of a low range of sand-hills crowned with mud-built shrines and tombs. The people belong to a race of unknown origin called 162
the Dulanis, who interested me very much. Sir P. Sykes says they are akin to the Kirghiz of the mountains[1]; but in 144
my humble opinion they have no connexion with that race, and are probably indigenous to the marshes and jungles of the Yarkand (Tarim) River between Yarkand and Aksu. They differ from the Kirghiz in facial appearance, physique, mentality and habits even more widely than from their neighbours the Turkis, with whom at any rate they have intermarried to a certain extent. The only common characteristic 562
I noticed in the Kirghiz and the Dulanis was the freedom accorded by both to their women, who not only mix freely unveiled with the men but do most of the hard work for them; and this is probably only a superficial resemblance, for the status of women among the Kirghiz is directly connected with their nomadic life. The Dulani women are remarkably good-looking and vivacious in the Southern European style and, as Miss Sykes noticed, eat, dance and sing with the men at entertainments which often last the whole night long—gaieties quite foreign to the quiet, Northern, rather staid Kirghiz. A vivid impression was made on us both by a handsome young village woman we talked to one afternoon, who might have been own sister to the subject of one of Miss Sykes' most charming photographic studies. As we sat on a bank near the western edge of the oasis looking out towards the golden dunes of the Takla Makan, she passed us carrying a sick lamb in her arms to the little farm buried in trees that

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[1] "Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia," p. 241.

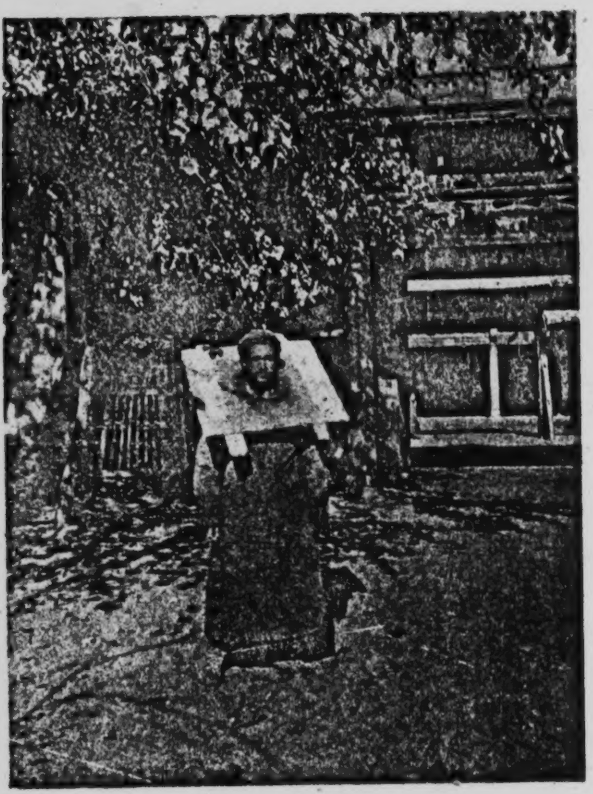
was her home. She made such a pretty picture as she smiled
562 to us in greeting that I took out my camera and snapped her,
saying as I did so "*Qurqmaselar.*" ("Don't be afraid"), for
I was accustomed to the shyness of the women of the plains
which renders a natural (i.e. unposed) photograph of them
so difficult to obtain. To our surprise she tossed her head and
said "I'm not afraid of men!" and then and there she chatted
pleasantly to us for a few minutes, holding the lamb in her arms
all the while, asking us all about ourselves and gossiping about
Merket and the Amban's visit. On another occasion we
noticed a Dulani woman digging in a field of heavy clay with
great energy, while her husband strolled along behind the
plough-bullocks close by. As for the town, the men there
seem to leave everything to the fair sex, and a picture comes
to my mind of a blacksmith's forge with a woman toiling away
at the bellows with one hand and holding a horse-shoe in the
fire with the other, while her husband and two other loafers
sat by looking on. It was an astonishing sight, every time
we issued from our Chinese rest-house just outside the bazaar,
to see rows and rows, not of women and children as at Keriya
but of full-grown men lining the railings waiting for us to come
out; I counted seventy-two of them on one occasion, and
hardly a single woman.

181 The standard of living as well as of morals among the Dulanis
is noticeably lower than among the Turkis; thieving is rife,
witness the watch-dogs which seem to average about three
per house. They are also an exceedingly quarrelsome and
vindictive race, in contrast to the easy-going, good-natured
627 Turki. A Dulani will do anything to hurt an enemy. It is
a regular thing for one who has a quarrel with another to
682 threaten to kill his child or himself "at" his enemy, i.e. in
order to bring bad luck on him, and sometimes he does it, too.
The extraordinary thing is that the Chinese recognize the
custom, and usually give judgment against the party "at"
whom the child-murder or suicide was committed! They
argue that the person who committed suicide or killed his child
must have been seriously wronged, otherwise he would not have
taken so dreadful a step. In a case I heard with the Amban of
Maralbashi one of the main issues, argued at great length, was
whether the plaintiff, who had attempted to kill himself by
swallowing an over-dose of opium, had done so "at" the
defendant, or, as the latter maintained, "at" a third party.

600 During our stay at Merket an important "international"

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

[Face p.124]



DEBTOR WEARING CANGUE, MAGISTRATE'S YAMEN, KARGHALIK

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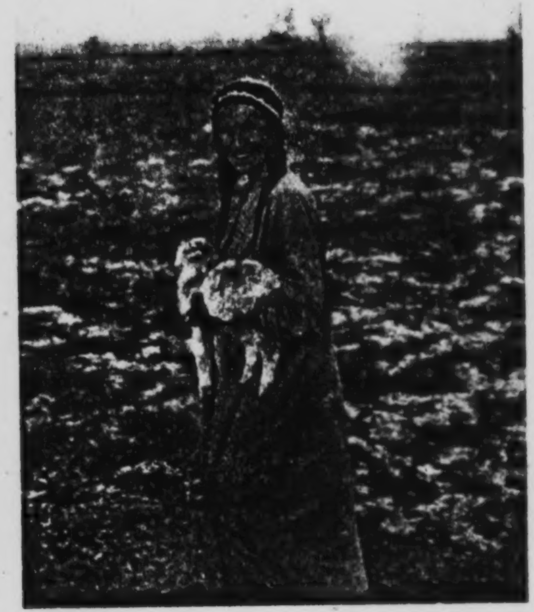

DULANI WOMAN WITH SICK LAMB, MERKET [p. 124]

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3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

case arose in connexion with the murder of a British subject
by his son at a village in the Yarkand district, and it became
487 necessary for me to confer with the Amban of Yarkand at
his headquarters. The march of 45 miles to Yarkand occupied
a day and a half and led us through country which alternated
[36] between desert-poplar forest, marshes and cultivation. The
display of bird life among the marshes along the right
bank of the Yarkand River was astonishing. We saw none
of the rainbow-plumaged "Shaw's pheasant" supposed to
haunt these jungles, but among the reedy lakes and water-
channels all along the road there was every now and again a
mighty cackling and splashing of duck, geese, teal, cormorants,
cranes, terns, plovers, coots, water-hens and many kinds of
lesser fowl. A Paradise indeed for the naturalist and even for
our ignorant selves, could we but have spared a few days to
[311] explore these little-known wilds with gun and camera. The
Yarkand oasis was entered at Abad, a village of several
hundred families living on land brought into cultivation
twenty years before by an Amban called Liu, who used prison
labour to dig a canal from the Yarkand River. This was one
of several instances I came across in the Yarkand neighbour-
hood of cultivation being extended by enterprising and
ambitious Magistrates. The area of this great oasis must
be now at least twice what it was fifty years ago under the
indigenous rule of Yakub Beg.

The five days my work occupied at Yarkand passed pleasantly enough at the garden of the Bar Gah, now a mass of snowy blossom, and while I sat in conclave with Amban or Aqsaqal, D. amused herself with shopping in the kaleidoscopic bazaars and exchanging visits with Swedish, Chinese, Indian and Turki friends. Once she was entertained at tea in the grand manner by the entire community of Hindu traders at their big caravanserai in the middle of the Old City, during the course of which a bowing young *bunnia* informed her that he knew the *Generail-Consul-Sahib* (i.e. me) quite well, as he had been a waiter at the United Services Club at Simla in 1920 when I had quarters there! Since then he had given up the job in order to join his brother who represented an Amritsar firm at Yarkand. Her visit to the Yamen to see the wife of the Amban was a somewhat difficult one. She found a child of eighteen, a forlorn, rather pathetic little figure dressed up like a doll, who almost died of nervousness and said through her Turki maid, "Please forgive me, I don't know what to do or say!" On Easter Sunday she attended the children's service at the Mission Orphanage three miles out 797 along the Kashgar road. I rode out to fetch her in the after- 747 noon and we were both shown over the establishment. We were immensely struck by the Orphanage, the acquaintance of whose small inmates we had already made at the Bar Gah the previous November. The children numbered thirty-five and ranged in age from ten months to fourteen or fifteen years, and all were happy as sand-boys, apple-cheeked little people, many of them, who might have been, so far as appearances were concerned, English or Scottish children of the same class. The institution, which is situated on an estate appropriately named "Bihisht Bagh" or "Garden of Paradise," included in addition to the usual playgrounds a fair-sized plot of land which the orphans helped to cultivate. Less than half the children were orphans in the ordinary sense, without either father or mother living; the rest were victims of the unfortunate temporary marriage system prevalent throughout Kashgaria—honorary orphans, as it were. Trouble was occasionally experienced from relations who, having kept in the background in the earlier stages, claimed children when the Orphanage had turned them into well-fed, well-behaved potential wage-earners. On the whole, however, the Orphanage was the most respected of all the works of the Swedish Mission, both among the Chinese and among the Turkis, whose religion taught them to regard kindness to an orphan as a *sawab* or merit-acquiring action of the highest order.

757 While at Yarkand I seized the opportunity of having my teeth seen to by Dr. Nyström of the Mission, who is an experienced dentist. His services are very much in request throughout Kashgaria, for he has an absolute monopoly of Western dental skill. High Chinese officials at Kashgar were always asking me when he would next come to the capital. He did visit Kashgar in January 1923 on Mission duty, when in response to the universal request he took his dental chair and appliances with him and spent a busy fortnight fitting toothless mandarins with dentures. From what Dr. Nyström told me and I heard from other sources I can confidently assert that any enterprising dentist who found his way to Sinkiang with a few instruments and a couple of camel-loads of false teeth would make a small fortune; moreover, he would have experiences with his clients seldom vouchsafed to practitioners in more sophisticated lands. Dr. Nyström once told me of a

wealthy old landowner of Yangi Hissar district who wrote to him asking for a set of teeth, to be sent by post. The exact wording of the following extracts from correspondence is not vouched for, but the facts are as related to me.

Letter from Ibrahim Beg Haji of Yangi Hissar to Dr. Nyström, Yarkand.

(After usual compliments). . . . May it be known to Your Excellency that from many years of chewing the stale bread of adversity and gnawing the hard bone of poverty the teeth which Allah bestowed on this slave have been worn away, until but one remains. Being well aware of Your Excellency's Galen-surpassing erudition and surgical skill, I pray you to send me by the hand of my messenger a set of teeth such as the Franks use, only they must be teeth that have come from no infidel jaw nor bitten the flesh of any unclean animal. . . .

Dr. N. to Ibrahim Beg Haji.

I have received your letter. Be it known to you that it is not possible for me to fit you with a set of artificial teeth without first seeing and measuring your mouth. Please therefore come to Yarkand and I will be at your service.

Ibrahim Beg Haji to Dr. N.

(After compliments and thanks). . . . I bitterly regret that the multifarious duties and family ties of this slave render a visit to Yarkand impossible. However, I know well that it is only the friendship with which you deign to favour me and the desire you feel for my unworthy company that impel you to invite me to Yarkand in person. I therefore send this by the hand of an aged retainer, Ishak Bai. My mouth resembles his, except that he has no teeth at all whereas my upper dog-tooth on the left side remains. Please make the teeth to fit his mouth, but leaving space for the above-mentioned dog-tooth, and send them to me without delay so that I may once more eat the flesh of sheep and goats to the glory of Allah and in thankfulness for your more-than-Hippocratic learning.

Dr. N. to Ibrahim Beg Haji.

. . . I regret that I cannot comply with your wishes. It would be useless to make the teeth fit Ishak Bai and not you. . . .

The correspondence ceased, but when shortly afterwards Dr. N. went to Kashgar, with his dental chair and instruments, he arranged to stay for a few days at Yangi Hissar on the way, chiefly for the benefit of old Ibrahim Beg Haji. When the Haji appeared and was duly seated on the torture-chair, the following dialogue (or something like it) took place :—

Dr. N. (finding a single very decayed and loose tooth remaining in his client's mouth) : This tooth must come out.

757 I. B. H.: Impossible. My last tooth! I cannot part with it.

Dr. N.: But you must. I cannot fit the set with one of your own teeth, and that a loose and decayed one, still in position.

I. B. H.: Surely you can make them with a gap into which my one can fit?

Dr. N.: I fear I cannot. You must let me take it out.

I. B. H.: It is the will of Allah. Allow me to take my leave. Farewell.

And that was the last that the Doctor saw of Ibrahim Beg Haji!

600 My work at Yarkand done, it was too late to turn our steps northwards again and continue the tour we had originally planned. April proved a much hotter month than we had expected, and we feared the notorious gadflies and mosquitoes of the Maralbashi jungles, which before the end of the month would be ravening for our blood and that of our animals. Moreover, about this time it became known to me that I would have further opportunities for the Aqsu tour, the Government of India having decided, for reasons into which it is unnecessary to enter, to keep me two years at Kashgar instead of the one for which I had originally been appointed.

It seemed a pity, however, to return to headquarters so soon by the comparatively dull main road which we had traversed only three months before, and in view of the heat I decided to make the experiment of a fortnight's détour among the high mountains. The opportunity appeared a favourable one for attempting the passage of the Qaratash Gorges which had baffled us the previous October; the summer floods were not to be expected until about the twentieth of April, while there was a reasonable prospect of the snow on the high passes which give access to the upper Qaratash having melted sufficiently to allow us to cross. Once in the upper Qaratash I hoped to find the weather clear enough and the water sufficiently low to permit a reconnaissance of the Chimghan Jilgha, which joins the main valley from the west just above the great gorges. This route would also take us across a region known as the Qizil Tagh (Red Mountains) to the west of the Yarkand oasis, which I was anxious to explore. Though the Red Mountains contain alpine pastures and some small patches of fir-forest, and are easily accessible both from Yarkand and from Yangi Hissar, they have only, so far as I know, been visited by Sir Aurel Stein, Col. Shuttleworth and some missionaries from Yarkand who established a summer camp among them a few years ago. It was a pity that bad visibility and shortage of time prevented plane-tabling in this region, so that I was unable to supplement Sir Aurel Stein's map by fitting into it a traverse of our route, which except for 14 miles in the Chighmen and Suget Jilghas was one which had not previously been followed by Sir Aurel or any other explorer.

Leaving Yarkand on 2nd April we spent the night at Qaraul Jash, 15 miles to the south-west of the city, as the guests of the British Aqsaqal, who had estates in that neighbourhood. Next day we plunged into the barren foothills of the Qizil Tagh. A long and hot march brought us to the only water in the region, brackish but just drinkable, a spring called Achiq Yusuf Qadir Khan. Here we camped thirstily, leaving at an early hour next morning in order to reach sweet water as soon as possible. It was not till three in the afternoon, however, that we crossed the last range of hills and found ourselves quite suddenly in the Chighmen Jilgha, a long valley which comes down from the inmost fastnesses of the Red Mountains and eventually debouches near Qizil Bazar on the Yarkand-Kashgar road. What a treat it was to come suddenly on a crystal, ice-cold stream and a little mill among willows just showing their spring green! It was too early to halt and we filed up the valley, passing croft after croft of the Kirghiz' rough stone-built huts with steeply-terraced cornfields now just beginning to be ploughed with the help of water carried along the hill-side in narrow channels. For these were "farmer Kirghiz" as we called them, not the pastoral, *aq-oi*-inhabiting Kirghiz of the higher mountains. Here are no great flocks and herds as on the high pastures of the Pamirs or the Tien Shan; only a few sheep and goats nibbling the scanty weeds along the rocky banks of the stream, guarded by tawny, thick-furred dogs. We stopped at a croft slightly larger than the rest to talk to the local Qazi, a typical thin-bearded, high-cheek-boned old Kirghiz, who earnestly begged us to pitch our tents on one or other of his pocket-handkerchief fields and be his guests. We spared the old man and pushed on another mile and a half, camping on a sheltered patch of grass in a bend of the stream-bed, 7,000 feet up.

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Next day we contented ourselves with a half-march of nine miles only and camped at the tiny Kirghiz settlement of Suget Ayaghi, near the outlet of the Suget Valley, an upper branch of the Chighmen. The first inhabitants we saw in this valley were four tiny tots of children whom we surprised

487 toddling down to the ice-covered stream with blackened copper water-jugs to fill, a pretty sight. Later, when our camp was pitched, came three cheerful vast-turbaned, apple-cheeked ladies, with their sewing and their babies, and made themselves comfortable on the grass in front of D.'s tent, chatting with us and among themselves until D. should be ready to receive them inside. Then they crowded into her tent and hung excitedly over her unpacking. Though accustomed to friendliness and naturalness on the part of the Kirghiz, D. was at first a little puzzled at the remarkable lack of shyness of these women, on our very first appearance among them; but the mystery was soon solved. As she was setting out her toilet-table one of them suddenly pounced on a box of *trèfle incarnat* with cries of "Ufpah! Ufpah!" which means "powder-puff." D. was astonished, until they explained. One of them, it appeared, was the daughter of old Ibrahim Beg of Yambulak, and had recently been on a visit to her parents, who had told her all about our stay in their valley last July on our way to Kashgar. Consequently, the Suget ladies knew all that D. had then said and done, how she had given those of Yambulak cold cream for their hands and had initiated them in the mysteries of powder and puff, how she had promised them gloves and had painted a picture of the Beg's pretty daughter-in-law, and many other items of breathless interest. So D. knew what was expected of her, and ere long the camp resounded with their delighted gigglings as they powdered their noses and preened themselves in front of D.'s camp mirror.

Soon after leaving Suget Ayaghi we passed through a remarkable cleft in the high rocky wall and found ourselves in a wide sunny valley with snow-clad peaks at its head. Here, at a height of about 9,000 feet, were the summer pastures of the Suget Kirghiz and two of their cottages. There were no trees, but high up on the flanks of the central peaks we could see patches of fir-forest. This, we were told, was the valley to which the missionaries from Yarkand had come more than once for their summer camp. Leaving the Suget Jilgha by a pass just over 10,000 feet high we descended into a pleasant little valley called the Tam Jilgha, so called from the number of stone houses (*tām*) it contained. Poplars grew in it, remarkable at a height of over 9,000 feet, and there was quite a respectable area of cultivation, chiefly barley. Here we saw three different kinds of animal being used in the plough

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within a few hundred yards; in one field a pair of horses and another of bullocks, on another plot a fine pair of yaks was harnessed to the plough. Crossing another quite easy pass we dropped down into the Sarai Jilgha, a much less fertile valley, with only two very poor families of Kirghiz in it.

On 8th April we crossed our third and highest pass in the Qizil Tagh, the Sarai Davan, 11,500 feet. It was steep and had a regular knife-edge top, but was not difficult and our carrier's ponies which were accustomed to the Karakoram road made light of it. Descending from the pass by a steep and narrow nullah we debouched on the Kinkol Valley at Kichik Qaraul, where we were on the Tashqurghan-Kashgar road up which we had come the previous July. We had thus left the "Red Mountains" behind us.

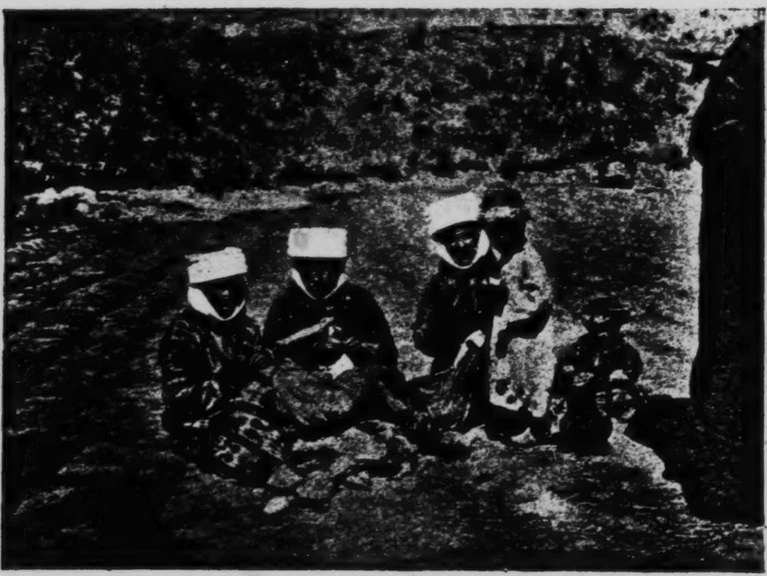
An attractive feature of the Qizil Tagh is the partridge shooting. We were there at the wrong time of year for it, but we shot a few birds for the pot now and then, and from the number of coveys we saw it was evident that in autumn a party of two or three guns would get a very good bag indeed in any one of the three valleys we visited. The only country in which I have seen as many red-legged partridge (*chikor*) as in the Qizil Tagh is the valleys of the Sulaiman Mountains in the north of British Baluchistan. The pursuit of the chikor or *keklik* (so called in Turki from the noise they make, kik-alik-alik-alik) is one of the most strenuous forms of sport I know. The birds are usually found near a steep, often precipitous, hillside; at the slightest alarm they run for it and climb, and you have to pound up after them as hard as you can. Without beaters, the difficulty usually is to put them up. Shooting for the pot, as I always did on these tours, I usually took a long shot at a runner, in which case the covey would often get up and in their agitation break back over my head, in which case I got a shot with my left barrel. This performance I could hardly describe as a "right and left," so I called it a "ground and air."

Marching up the Kinkol valley we struck westwards up the Chumbuz Jilgha, a promising glen, of which I had made a note for future exploration the previous July. It led up into another small blank patch in Sir. A. Stein's map, and my object was to survey it roughly and cross by a pass called the Kizmak which I knew led over from its head into the upper Qaratash Valley. Lest the Kizmak should prove really bad—it had never been crossed by European—I decided to send most

487 of the servants and baggage round by the Ghijak Pass to the north, while D. and I with two orderlies, a couple of Kirghiz guides and little else but our toothbrushes, crossed the Kizmak. Each party spending a night on the way, we were to meet the baggage at Chat in the Qaratash Valley, six miles above the great gorges down which we hoped to pass.

Before carrying out this plan we halted a day at a croft called Chong Terek or the Big Poplar, a couple of miles up the Chumbuz Jilgha. The day was spent by me in surveying the lower part of the Chumbuz valley and by D. in doctoring the Kirghiz, baking scones and hunting chikor and pigeons. We were still, at 8,000 feet, among agricultural Kirghiz, and we did not like them nearly as much as the pastoral inhabitants
162 of the higher levels. The people of the lower Chumbuz Jilgha seemed to us a mongrel mixture of Turki and Kirghiz, com-
181 bining the laziness of the former with the untruthfulness of the latter and lacking the good qualities of either. The women, too, D. said, were more like the sophisticated product of the plains than the handsome, fearless, busy ladies of the lofty grazing-grounds. We found ourselves among the latter kind once more at the Kizmak pastures near the head of the Chumbuz Jilgha, which we ascended on 9th April while our caravan
[361] went round by the Ghijaq Pass. The tents of the Kizmak
[291] Kirghiz were pitched at an elevation of 11,100 feet, on a steeply-sloping strip of land under high red sandstone cliffs beside the partially-frozen stream, and the place swarmed with a picturesque medley of men in huge fur-rimmed caps, women in their quaint turbans, children, yaks, ponies, sheep, goats,
000 dogs and cats. A large *aq-oi* full of warm-tinted rugs and other Kirghiz "furniture" was hastily vacated for us, the tiny bath-tent we always carried on these occasions was put up outside, and we were soon comfortably settled. It was still early in the afternoon, and the ladies soon had D. out; armed with her medicine-bottles she visited each of the other tents in turn, bathing sore eyes, anointing neglected cuts and badly chapped hands and prescribing for the universal indigestion caused by the rock-like bread and masses of sour cream the Kirghiz indulge in. Her description in a letter of the scene in the last *aq-oi* she visited is delightful. "I sat on the floor," she says, "tying up a woman's badly-cut knee, while three others stood round holding out their dresses as a screen from the male inmates of the tent; in the middle, over the

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All



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KIRGHIZ CALLERS, QIZIL TAGH REGION

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A KIRGHIZ WEDDING BREAKFAST, UPPER QARATASH VALLEY

[Face p.132]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

000 fire, a man was cooking an entire sheep ; in another direction five men were saying their evening prayers ; twelve young lambs were tied up in a row in another part of the *aq-oi* and all the rest of the room was taken up by the fat Beg who sat warming his feet at the fire and sipping a bowl of tea ! "

487 The Kizmak Pass next day proved terribly steep and some 14,000 feet high, but the magnificent yaks provided by the Kirghiz carried our loads up it (though with many halts and tremendous puffings and gruntings). They then tobogganed neatly down the still steeper descent on the west side, which contained snow and showed signs of recent avalanches. The glorious view from the top, including the whole mountain-system of the upper and middle Qaratash, kept us there nearly two hours ; though unfortunately it was too late in the day for either Qungur or Muz Tagh Ata to be free from clouds, and my telephotographs were not successful. A long day ended with a six-mile canter against a howling north wind down the broad flat bottom of the Qaratash Valley to Chat, where we were relieved to find our caravan waiting for us and our tents pitched. Six inches of snow fell that night, but next morning it cleared up and I decided to halt a day, which I spent in plane-tabling and telephotographing the magnificent snows of Qungur and the Shiwakte from the heights above Chat.

Next day (12th April) we started the march down the Qaratash Gorges, to which I had been looking forward with some apprehension. The worst part does not begin till below the junction of the Qaratash and Chimghan valleys, six miles below Chat, but even in this six miles the valley narrows
585 considerably and the river has to be forded seven times. Four miles below Chat, at a place called Bek Targhak, we had the unexpected pleasure of assisting at a Kirghiz wedding feast. Forty or fifty Kirghiz, including several women, were gathered at a mud-walled enclosure in which four *aq-ois* were pitched ; they invited us through the Beg to come in, and next moment we found ourselves sitting in a crowded *aq-oi* chewing portions of a sheep which was being stewed at the fire in the middle. Asking which were the happy pair, we were informed that neither of them was present, it being the custom throughout the *nikah* or wedding feast for the bride and bridegroom to stay in their respective tents in the background. D. was taken in to see the lady and reported afterwards that she was a woman

585 [587] of about twenty-five who was marrying for the second time; her late husband had been the first cousin of the present bridegroom, who was marrying her as next-of-kin according to a common practice among the Kirghiz.[1]

We had no little difficulty in tearing ourselves away from the hospitable Kirghiz, who evidently considered we had brought luck to the happy pair. The revelry was still in its early stages, and every moment more and more guests arrived, some riding two on a pony or camel, others striding through the sleet on foot. We did our best in the way of wedding presents, but all the coloured scarves, woollen gloves, bead necklaces, hunting-knives and other treasures we had brought had already been distributed among the Kirghiz of the Qizil Tagh and other places along the road. However, we left the bridegroom very happy with a small cash present and the bride radiant with a magnificent pair of diamond and pink pearl ear-rings which D. had bought for the equivalent of about a shilling at a Hindu shop in Yarkand.

487 Eventually, after I had photographed the family party in the *aq-oi*, as well as the entire assembly outside, we escaped and made our way after the caravan as fast as the rough track would let us. Two miles lower down we came to the junction of the Chimghan and Qaratash rivers and looked longingly up the fine wide valley of the former stream. Its flat bottom was fully a mile broad with meadows, cultivation and willow woods; as the sky cleared and the mists rose we caught glimpses of magnificent snowy ranges rising ten thousand feet above it on either side. No European but our one predecessor, Stein, had so much as looked up it, and even he had not explored it. I would have given much to spend two or three days camping up the Chimghan Jilgha, which I knew would lead me into the inmost fastnesses of Qungur and the mysterious Shiwakte; but I dared not. In mid-April the summer floods might come down any day, and it was inadvisable to run the risk of being trapped by them in the middle of the dreaded Qaratash gorges. As it was, the combined waters of the Chimghan and Qaratash streams, which we had to cross thirty-one times before we at last emerged upon the plains at Altunluk, were only just fordable by our baggage-ponies; our bedding and boxes of clothes we loaded on two or three camels which the Kirghiz produced, steady sure-footed

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[1] For an account of the marriage customs of the Kirghiz in the Alps of Qungur, see Chapter XI.

animals, which scarcely allowed their loads to be so much as splashed.

It was half-past twelve when we crossed the last of the four channels of the Chimghan stream at its junction with the Qaratash and dived into the great gorges. The rest of that day's march was a strange experience. The mountain-sides towered up 10,000 feet on either side, with the snouts of occasional hanging glaciers visible far above us. The river dashed backwards and forwards between its rocky walls, high up the face of which we could here and there make out the track, a few inches wide and carried from ledge to ledge on the slender trunks of young fir trees, which in summer forms the only communication between the inhabitants of some of the glens and the outer world. The worst part was a horrible gorge called Arasunde, which we reached late in the afternoon. Here the torrent was quite unfordable, and it took our loads nearly two hours to cover one mile, so often did the ponies have to be unloaded and the packs man-handled between huge boulders or along dangerous sections of the track, which clung giddily to the cliff-face above the racing flood. After this I had to give up hope of reaching our camping-place of the previous October at Bash Kupruk below the mouth of the Kaying Jilgha; darkness overtook us more than a mile above that place, and we were obliged to halt for the night on a narrow strip of land boasting a few small trees and bushes for fire-wood but very little grazing for the animals. Though it was half-past seven before the loads were off and the temperature of the wind blowing up-river 42°, we were sitting down to a three-course dinner in D.'s tent at half-past eight, with beds made and everything ship-shape for the night, and all the men (except Ahmad Bakhsh and Murad who served us and supped later) laughing and talking over their evening meal round the camp fire.

After that day's march even the Tügene-tar gorge below Bash Kupruk was plain sailing, and we camped at Saman in comparative comfort next afternoon. Here we were met by a consignment of grain for the horses and food for the men, which I had arranged to have brought up from Yangi Hissar, also by D.'s camel Sulaiman, which had been sent there by the plains route from Yarkand. He was a useful addition to our caravan, as my horse and D.'s had exactly five shoes between them by the time they reached Saman. D. rode Sulaiman and our spare riding-pony alternately the last 57 miles between

487 Saman and Kashgar, which we did between 9 a.m. on 14th April and 2.30 p.m. on the 15th. Not bad going considering that all but the last five of the 34 miles between Saman and Akhtur Bazar were over rough, stony tracks and included three more crossings of the Qaratash River.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER X

A MURDER CASE AND A DIFFICULT JOURNEY

EARLY summer in Kashgaria is a time of crystal-clear 132 mornings and noonday skies of indigo flecked with argosies of creamy clouds. But the weather is by no means monotonously perfect. Every week or two comes a thickening of the atmosphere and an increasing sultriness which leads up to a *buran* or storm of dust and rain. Compared with those of South Persia or Upper India these *burans* are mild affairs, though further east round the edges of the Takla Makan they can be bad enough. A high wind, a pale brown sky, a consciousness of fine loess dust collecting in one's eyes and gritting on one's teeth; this goes on for some hours, perhaps the whole day, and then comes a drumming and a sputtering of warm rain which passes in an hour or two and leaves the air clean and sweet, the garden full of scent and the landscape of colour. Colour—that is the 291 note of Kashgar in summer. Not only is Nature a rich mosaic of emerald and turquoise and ochre, but Man decks himself—and herself—in every colour of the rainbow. Accustomed to the dirty white or dust-coloured raiment of Upper India and Baluchistan, the effective but monotonous dark red of the women of Rajputana and Central India, the dead white or coal black affected by their sisters in Persia and Mespotamia, I did not know what the " gorgeous East " could be until I saw the bazaars at Kashgar on a summer's morning. The 'Id festival which comes at the end of the Ramazan fast happened to fall in May our first year. This is an occasion on which every one who can afford to do so, man, woman and child, comes out in new clothes—and almost every one can afford them, for the dyed silks of Khotan are dirt-cheap and even the superior products of Ferghana and Bokhara far from dear. To the many-hued cloaks, dresses and pork-pie hats

2291 of the ladies are added the long striped *chapans* of purple, green and yellow sported by their husbands. But the prettiest pictures of all are the merry groups of little girls who roam the streets hand-in-hand clad in rainbow-tinted silks and cottons, their curls decked with red roses thrown to them from the flower-stalls. Many of the colours are crude enough, green and yellow, magenta and vermilion, mauve and peacock blue; but even the gaudiest contrasts somehow blend under the blue sky and against the warm-toned background of wooden houses and loess bluffs. Of many a vivid picture one perhaps stands out in memory. It is of the sun sinking in glory over the Tien Shan, its level rays bathing farmstead and foliage in gold; at the door of a farm-house where there has been a party, a group of departing women guests stand gossiping, their cloaks, dresses and caps making an exquisite pattern of orange, maroon, apple-green, rose-pink, purple, indigo and lemon-yellow all enriched and blended by the golden light; beyond, the long brown walls of Old Kashgar.

000 Midsummer approached, the cooling showers became rarer, and there came a suspicion of sultriness in the nights. The Chinese officials retired to the seclusion of their yamen gardens, the Swedes in relays to their "hill-station" at Bostan Terek, and the Russians to their favourite camping ground at Salarma, ten miles from the city. As for the better-class Turkis and British subjects, they had already deserted the town for their country gardens. It would be disingenuous of me to convey the impression that we at the Consulate-General suffered from the heat and that a trip to the "Hills" became advisable on hygienic grounds. But prevention, we told ourselves, was better than cure; I had one or two long reports to write which would be the better for the seclusion of a suitable *villégiature;* and altogether there were cogent reasons for a short sojourn among the mountains. In truth, of course, it was the Happy Valley that called us, and there was no stopping our ears to its call. Whether we would succeed in reaching it or not was another question. The Tümen and Qizil Su rivers were in full flood and several bridges had already been carried away, including the big one between the Old and New Cities; I had visions of the lower Qaratash valley brimming with turbid waters and our caravan struggling hopelessly in their grip. But I knew that even if the direct route proved impossible, we could still as a last resort reach Kaying Bashi by a three days' détour across seven of the "Nine Passes" in the Gez

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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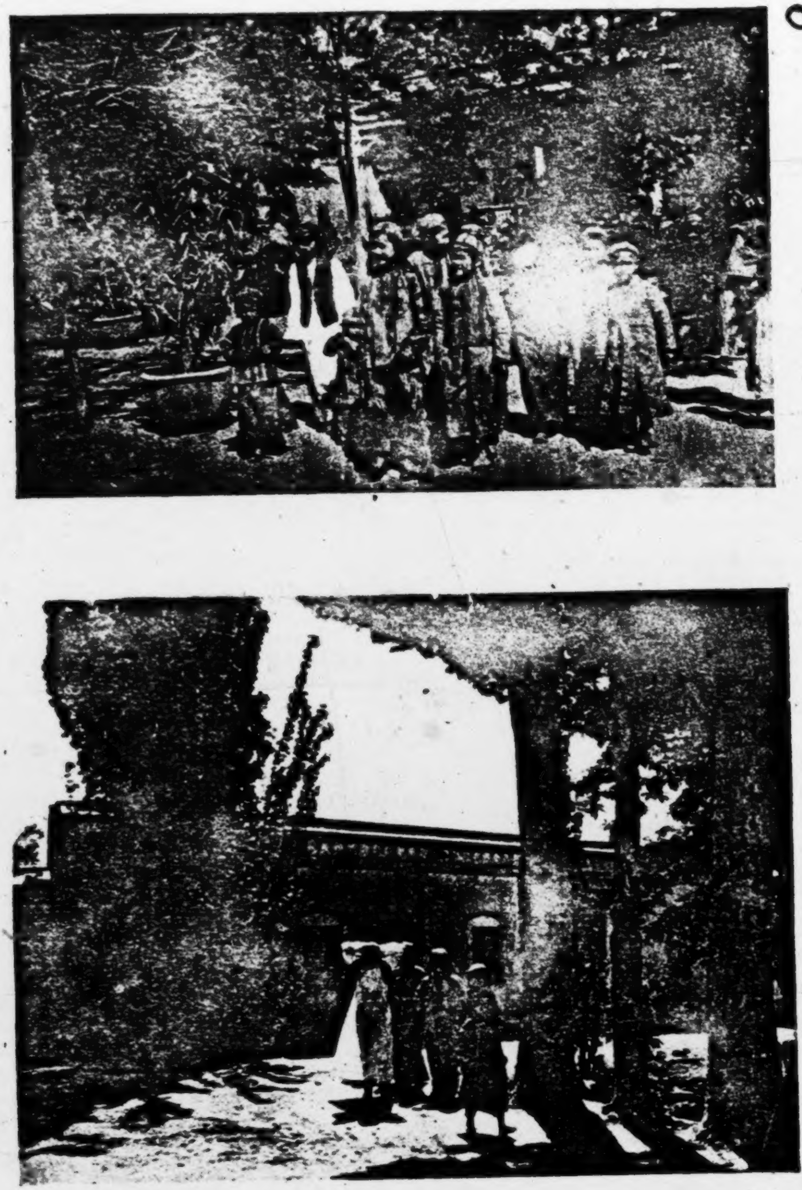

KASHGARI CHILDREN IN GALA ATTIRE FOR THE QURBAN 'ID FESTIVAL

[Face p. 138]

000 Valley and over the Achiq Davan to Khanterek on the Qaratash. Brian O'Flynn and his camels were not available this time, but Zakir Haji, the carrier whom we had employed on our spring tour, had served us very well in the mountains, and we were glad to be able to secure him and his ten ponies once more. Our retinue included the same well-tried orderlies and servants who had accompanied us the previous autumn, except that the ex-Lancer Rahim Khan, who was really past his work, was replaced by our sturdy, wise old Ladakhi Jemadar, Ghulam Muhammad. Another notable addition to our caravan was the fine grey donkey we had acquired in the spring for the sweeper Yakub to ride, in order to save the hire of a special pony for him. Tooty (short for Tutankhamen) cost us the equivalent of 25*s.* 6*d.* at the Thursday live-stock market outside Kashgar, which we visited in person to buy him, and he carried Yakub right staunchly over hill and dale throughout all our subsequent wanderings. D. regarded him as one of her pets, and if on the march he led laborious days, at the Consulate between tours he lived on the fat of the land. He had one drawback, and that was a frequent and most stentorian bray. Echoing among the precipices of the mountains, Tooty's bray would have awakened the Seven Sleepers, and every night we had to see that he was tied up with plenty of lucerne at least a quarter of a mile from our tents.

692 682 On the afternoon of the 19th June we rode to Yapchan, and next day we lunched at Yangi Hissar. My presence at this town, which is some miles to the east of the mouth of the Qaratash, was required for the joint trial with the Amban of an interesting murder case in which a Kirghiz of the Qizil Tagh was accused of killing a Chitrali traveller. The murdered man being a British and the accused a Chinese subject, the case was a "mixed" one triable by the Chinese authorities, with myself as British Consul-General "watching" it on behalf of the Government of India and the murdered man's relations.[1] The details of the case are not without dramatic interest and are worthy of record.

In February 1923 I received a letter from the Assistant Political Agent in Chitral, in the North-West Frontier Province of India, enclosing a petition from the relations of one Muham-

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[1] If the nationalities had been reversed, with the accused a British and the deceased a Chinese subject, I would have tried the case at Kashgar in my Consular court with the Taoyin watching it on behalf of the Governor.

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mad Shah. This was to the effect that the said Muhammad Shah, a trader of Chitral, had left Yangi Hissar in the province of Sinkiang in the previous December but had never reached his home. I requested the Taoyin to make inquiries, at the same time calling for a report from the British Aqsaqal at Yangi Hissar. The latter replied that Muhammad Shah had indeed left Yangi Hissar two months before, travelling alone, and had been traced as far as Ighiz Yar on the Tashqurghan road, but had not been seen or heard of since. Nothing happened and I had almost given up hope of the mystery being cleared up, when towards the end of May the Taoyin informed me that a man had been arrested on the charge of murdering Muhammad Shah at a wild spot called Sasik Tika in the Qizil Tagh two marches from Yangi Hissar along the Tashqurghan road, and that in due course he would be tried by the Magistrate of Yangi Hissar, Mr. Chiang.

According to Chinese judicial procedure, the Magistrate of a district in which a murder has been committed is held responsible for this breach of law and order, and incurs a degree of disgrace inversely proportionate to the distance from his headquarters of the place where the crime was committed. He must proceed at once to the spot and view the corpse, no matter where it is or how long it has been buried, and hold an inquest in person. The result is that corpulent Mandarins, who never stir from their Yamens if they can possibly help it, take the greatest care that no murder be committed within their borders, not only because of the black marks they receive, but also on account of the irksome journey that may be involved. As has happened more than once of recent years in Kashgaria, when a murder takes place near the boundary between two districts, the Beg and local headmen know what is expected of them and take good care that the body is not found within *their* master's jurisdiction. The people in the next district feel the same about it, and thus the unfortunate corpse is bandied surreptitiously backwards and forwards until its relatives succeed in inducing one set of authorities or the other to take up the case. The system has at any rate the advantage of keeping down violent crime, which is liable to cause so much trouble to everybody concerned, from the District Magistrate downwards; and certainly during the two and a quarter years I was at Kashgar, out of all the hundreds of British Indian traders and other nationals travelling about the country with goods or money or living on their estates, only one was murdered. That was Muhammad Shah, the victim in the present case.

Poor Mr. Chiang did not at all like having to drive and ride forty miles up into the mountains to hold an inquest upon the four-month-old corpse of the Chitrali, but he did it, and one of my Assistant Aqsaqals accompanied him. As a result of the inquest a Kirghiz of Sasik Tika was charged with the murder and the case referred to the Taoyin of Kashgar for orders. I was informed, as already stated, and it was arranged between myself and the Taoyin, in order to save the delay and expense involved in bringing the case to Kashgar for trial, that I should visit Yangi Hissar on my way to the mountains and assist at the hearing of the case by the Magistrate. The trial, which took place on the morning after our arrival (21st June), was short, as the accused had confessed and it was only necessary to examine, besides the man himself, the Beg of the circle and the *yuzbashi* (headman) of the valley. The prisoner, a man of about 30, was of an unmistakably criminal type with low, receding forehead, eyes set close together, and a violent squint. The story he and the witnesses told Mr. Chiang and myself, as we sat at a huge table in the open inner courtyard of the Yamen, was as follows:

Muhammad Shah was an opium-smuggler and had sold a consignment of Afghan opium profitably in Yarkand the previous autumn. Early in December, that is to say about as late in the season as he could reasonably expect to cross the high passes safely, he started alone from Yangi Hissar for his home in far Chitral across the Roof of the World. He rode a wiry little Yarkand pony, and in his sadlle-bags he carried the balance of his profits in the shape of a few taels' worth of silver and a couple of bales of gaily-dyed Khotan silks; for the greater part of the proceeds of his opium-running had doubtless been spent in the oiling of necessary palms and in obtaining from the Yamen a permit to leave the country.

On the evening of his second day on the road Muhammad Shah found himself at Sasik Tika and asked for shelter at the solitary hut occupied by the prisoner, Yakub. The Kirghiz came out and looked at the traveller and his bulging saddle-bags. "We are the poorest of the poor," he said, "and have no food, but we will put you up for the night. Only, you must sleep outside the tent as my wife and three children are all ill inside." Accordingly Muhammad Shah, having hobbled his pony and muttered Mecca-wards his evening prayer, ate two

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of the little round shiny loaves he had brought with him and threw himself down on the felt mat which his host spread in front of the tent for him. For pillow he had his saddlebags and for bedclothes his sheepskin cloak, and he was soon fast asleep in spite of the icy breath of night which now and again passed down the gloomy valley like a sigh.

Two hours later, when the moon had set, Yakub crept out of the hut and peered stealthily at his guest in the faint starlight. Then he went to a heap of stones close by and selected a big slab which he could just carry shoulder-high. Staggering with it to where Muhammad Shah lay, he heaved it on the unfortunate sleeper's head. As Yakub himself put it: "He just gave a little kick and moved no more." Dragging the body on the felt mat as it lay, he hid it behind a boulder and went back to bed. Early in the morning he rose and went out, telling his wife (who knew nothing of what he had done) that he was going to work at the coal-mine.[1] Going to where the body lay he wrapped it up in the felt and heaved it first on to a boulder and thence on to the back of the dead man's pony, which he proceeded to drive in front of him up a steep and narrow side-glen into the snowy fastnesses of the Qizil Tagh. Up and up he went, to the verge of the winter snows, and there he threw the corpse down into the dry bed of the torrent and buried it by tumbling rocks on it from above. He would have liked to keep the pony, but it would have been too dangerous; so he tied the poor beast's legs together and pushed it over a precipice. The dead man's money he hid in a secret place and the silks he stored in the hut, telling his wife that he had received them from a trader in exchange for the skins of some stone-martens he had trapped.

Weeks passed and nothing happened, so that gradually Yakub plucked up courage to go to Yangi Hissar on market day and spend some of his new fortune. A wedding took place in a neighbouring valley to which he and his wife, with all the other Kirghiz of the Qizil Tagh, were invited; every one noticed the beautiful new silk clothes of Mrs. Yakub, and word went round that her husband had somehow become rich. Then one day the inhabitants of the Kinkol valley received an unexpected and unwelcome visit from their Beg, who brought grave news from Yangi Hissar. The British Consul-General, it appeared,

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[1] A shallow surface-working on a seam recently discovered in the neighbourhood and exploited by the Chinese military authorities, who claim a monopoly of all minerals.

had formally requested the Taoyin, and through him their 692
Magistrate, to make inquiries into the whereabouts of a British 682
subject last heard of in Yangi Hissar district. This meant that unless they, the Beg, headmen and people of the Kinkol valley, could either find the fellow or prove that he had crossed the passes into Tashkurghan district, unpleasant things would happen to them.

It was not long before the suspicions of the headmen fell upon our friend Yakub. The latter at first strenuously denied all knowledge of the missing man; but he failed to explain how he had become so wealthy all of a sudden, and eventually he confessed. Let us not inquire too closely into the methods by which the Beg and his minions persuaded Yakub to be frank with them. Suffice it to say that according to the old Chinese law still in force in Sinkiang no one can be convicted of any crime, no matter how strong the evidence against him may be, unless he confesses it; so that those responsible for the suppression of crime become experts in the fine art of eliciting confessions from recalcitrant prisoners. From the point of view of the British Consulate-General, all that mattered was that Yakub gave Mr. Chang and myself a detailed and even graphic account of how he did the deed, so that Chinese justice could take its course, the claims of Muhammad Shah's relatives in far Chitral be duly honoured and the bonds of amity between two great nations further strengthened through their local representatives. True, the said relatives of the deceased not only received no blood-money, as they would have done if he had waited till he reached his own country before getting himself murdered, but had to be content with a mere fraction of his estate—for the local people who had had so much trouble and anxiety over the matter, from the Beg down to the prisoner's (more or less) innocent wife, could not be expected to disgorge more than a reasonable percentage of the spoils. But then, Muhammad Shah had no business to indulge in opium-running in Chinese territory. With my concurrence, the Magistrate 696
found Yakub guilty of murder and condemned him to death; six weeks later, when the necessary confirmation had been received from the Governor at Urumchi, the murderer was duly hanged in the presence of the British Aqsaqal of Yangi Hissar.

To return to our own journey. Soon after midday, when the 000
trial was over, a cloth was laid on the Court table and the Magistrate and I seized our chop-sticks and set to work on a regular Yamen dinner of about twenty-five courses which

000 lasted till four. Meanwhile, lest worse should befall (for there was talk of another feast the same evening *chez* the Commandant of the Garrison) I had sent word to D. to push the caravan off and be ready to start as soon as I could escape from the Yamen. Within half an hour of the disappearance of the longed-for bowl of rice which terminates all Chinese feasts I had joined her on the road and we were riding westward on a golden evening. Our first march was necessarily a short one, and our destination appropriately Altunluk, the "Golden Village" at the mouth of the Qaratash Valley. As we mounted the long, gentle slope on which the village and its orchards stand, the sun set right over the south-western Tien Shan beyond which lies Ferghana; it was so clear that we could see the whole plain of Kashgar, sixty miles broad, and the green villages which stretched up to the foot-hills of the great ranges on three sides of it. But, alas, ominous banks of cloud enveloped the Alps of Qungur which had been so clear in the morning; once more, by a curious fatality, the mountains for which we were bound hid themselves from our sight as we 487 approached. That night I held conclave with the greybeards of Altunluk and old Sabit Beg, who again came with us by order of the Amban, as to the route to be followed on the morrow. All were agreed that loaded ponies could not possibly reach Khan Terek owing to the volume of water in the river. I was prepared for this, and after long argument I elicited from them an admission that the river *could* be crossed not far above Altunluk, if you took it at the right time of day, and that for the rest the only really bad place was the "Narrows" below Saman, where it would not be possible to ford the Qaratash and we would have to hug the left bank, which is precipitous and difficult. This was better than toiling round by the almost waterless Nine Passes route and losing two precious days at Kaying, so I decided to try the direct route up the Qaratash.

Next day (22nd June) at noon, when the daily fall in the level of the water had taken place,[1] we forded the river successfully four miles above Altunluk, where its stone-grey waters raced over a pebbly bed several hundred yards wide in seven channels. Three of these were so swift and deep that it was only with the help of ten sturdy lads of the village, who kept their feet in the flood with a skill born of long practice, that our animals managed to flounder across without mishap. One of the ponies, indeed, was carried some way down-stream with his load, but a party of villagers joined hands and succeeded in pulling him into shallower water. Besides Tutankhamen, we had seven donkeys laden with forage, and these had practically to be carried across bodily, loads and all, by two villagers apiece.

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[1] It may be explained that among these mountains, as elsewhere in High Asia, the volume of water in the rivers increases and decreases daily at definite hours which depend at any particular point on the time taken by the water of the snows melted by the noonday sun to reach it. When arriving at a river, the first question the experienced traveller asks of the local people, if any, is "At what hour does the water reach this place?" or, if the daily flood is in progress, "When does it go down?" At Altunluk the Qaratash is at its highest between midnight and 10 a.m.

For the next three hours we made good progress and fondly imagined we would make Saman easily by nightfall. When, however, at three o'clock in the afternoon we reached the lower end of the Narrows, we met a funny, wizened little old Kirghiz who told us that the path had been carried away by the recent heavy rains and that it was not possible to get through even on foot, much less with loaded ponies. He was on his way home, he told us, from Yangi Hissar to the grazing-grounds of the upper Yapchan Jilgha, and had been held up by the wash-out in the Narrows. Fortunate it was for us that we happened upon the old Kirghiz at this juncture, for he knew of a pass away up among the barren ridges to the west, by which the Narrows could be circumvented, and offered to guide us over it. We afterwards came to know and like old Samsaq Bai, for that was his name, very well; but at first we suspected him of being slightly mad, for not only was his Turki almost unintelligible to us but he punctuated his remarks with strange bursts of elfin laughter. I thought it best, therefore, not to commit the caravan to his care at once, but to camp where we were on the banks of the Qaratash and spend the rest of the afternoon reconnoitring. The alternative, a depressing one, was to return to Altunluk and go round by the "Nine Passes."

Accordingly while D. and Sangi Khan went off on foot to reconnoitre the path through the Narrows on their own account, I mounted Samsaq Bai on one of our ponies and off we went up into the forbidding-looking jumble of hills to the west. For six weary miles we toiled up waterless and absolutely barren defiles. Then, turning a corner, my companion pointed up to a sharp backbone of rock on the sky-line, cleft at one point only by a narrow and forbidding couloir which led up to a

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

487 small gap in the ridge. This "pass," which he called the Aqsai Davan, looked impossible at first, but when I climbed up to the foot of the couloir I found that there was a well-marked track straight up it between perpendicular walls with a gradient of about one in two. I came to the conclusion that by unloading the animals and man-handling them and the loads up to the top we could get the caravan over, while as for the descent on the other side, Samsaq assured me that it was not nearly so steep.

D. reported that night that the track up to the Narrows was good for a couple of miles, but then dwindled away until it became a red-clay slide going straight down to the river a hundred feet below. Apparently the recent heavy rains had washed away what track there had been. We made an early start next morning and reached the foot of the final *col* at half-past ten. The first animal to achieve the ascent was D.'s horse, which scrambled up with Sangi Khan at his head and D. hanging on to his tail. Next came the camel, Sulaiman, hauled in front by Yakub and propelled behind by Samsaq and an Altunluk man, one of the funniest sights I have ever seen. Though we expected every moment that his lanky, loose-jointed legs would collapse, he behaved admirably and reached the top intact. The riding-horses, donkeys and baggage-ponies followed one by one, mostly without their loads. Unlike donkeys and camels, horses can never quite be relied upon on such occasions, and two of the baggage ponies at different points in the ascent suddenly lost heart and backed down the hill, in spite of all that four men reinforced by myself could do to stop them. In each case the animal quickly lost its footing, became wildly excited and rolled itself and the men off the path into the bottom of the couloir, fortunately only a few feet below the track. There, boulders prevented the struggling mass of pony and men from sliding further down the hill. Neither of the ponies received more than a few bruises and scratches, and they eventually reached the top safely. The descent proved, as Samsaq had said, less breakneck than the ascent, but it was steep enough, and we were all immensely relieved when the loads and animals were safely over the pass and filing down long winding gorges which led back to the main valley above the Narrows. The whole détour occupied seven hours, including more than two hours spent in getting over the *col* itself, i.e. five hours longer than it would have taken us to go by the direct route had the track been practicable.

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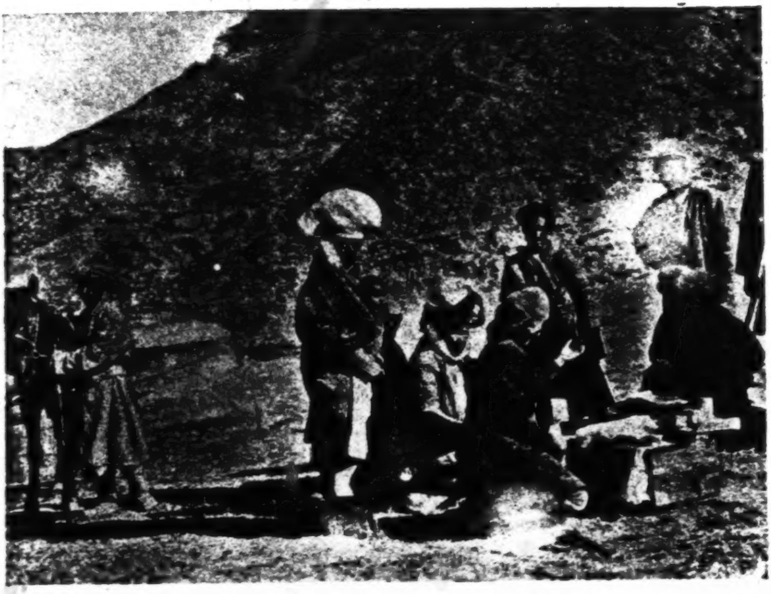

DISPENSING MEDICINE TO THE KIRGHIZ, CHOPKANA JILGHA

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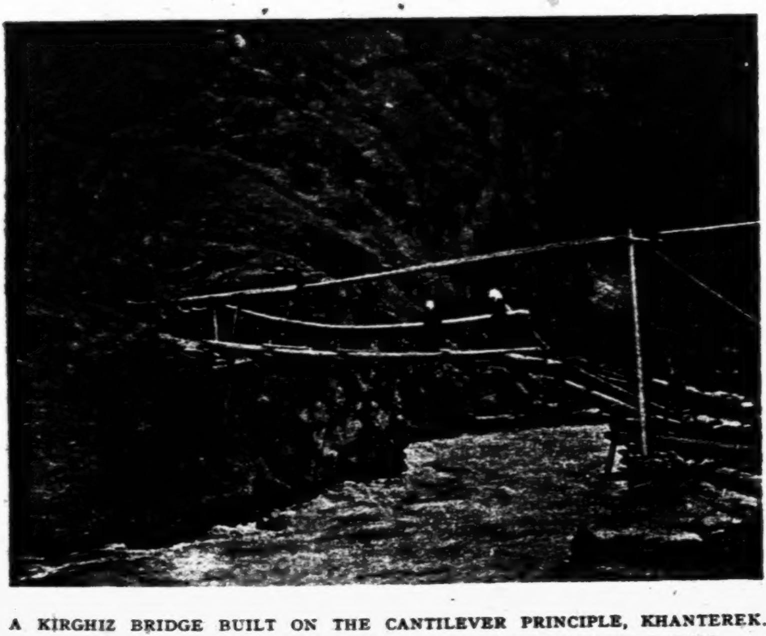

A KIRGHIZ BRIDGE BUILT ON THE CANTILEVER PRINCIPLE, KHANTEREK. THE FOREMOST OF THE LADIES CROSSING IS CARRYING TWIN BABIES

[Face p. 146] ~~[p. 95~~

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

487 We did not halt at Saman, as there was one obstacle still to be negotiated before our entrance to the Promised Land was assured. This was a corner of rock which juts out into the stream at the rapids below Khan Terek. At this point the track passes round the rock and is under water even in winter, and I knew that the only chance of getting round it at this season would be at low water in the evening. We came to the place at half-past four, when I found to my relief that there were only about three feet of water off the end of the rock and that the current was not strong, though few feet farther out the cataract roared past like a gigantic mill-race. The loads splashed through without mishap, and half an hour later in the little orchard of Qurghan we were being warmly welcomed by a dozen beaming Kirghiz men and girls.

The only permanent inhabitant of Khan Terek was a little
574 old woman who lived alone in a tiny shanty. Each of the
previous occasions on which we had passed her hut she had
bustled out with a large copper jug and a wooden bowl to give
us tea. She saw us coming this time and hobbled over to our
camp where, for once, she had tea with us. Afterwards
D. returned her call; she found the old lady living in a room
about five feet square off a yard about twice that area, in
which she kept one aged cock. Her husband had long been
dead, she told D., and her children scattered, but one son
occasionally came and cultivated a couple of fields near by,
while she stayed in the hut all the year round and made tea
for passing Kirghiz.

The humble hospitality of even the poorest of the Kirghiz
in these parts warmed our hearts to them. Next day three
miles up the Chopkana valley we were overtaken by heavy
rain and took refuge in an *aq-oi*. A pretty girl and her one-eyed
old father insisted on making up a blazing fire for us
and a bowl of tea, chatting politely to us the while. On an
exposed meadow at the very top of the pass, 11,500 feet above
the sea, we found a solitary *aq-oi* with a girl in it whose husband
was away on the hill-side tending the flocks. She had
weather-beaten red cheeks and a flat nose, but she was charming
and joined us in the tea-basket tea with which we warmed
ourselves while waiting for the caravan to struggle up the last
262 steep ascent. Meanwhile, in a large pot on the central fire
of fir-logs, she brewed *mach*, a kind of soup of milk, barley-meal
and water with a little meat in it, and when our men
arrived at the top she ran out and administered it to them
IN WOODEN BOWLS.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

574 in wooden bowls. Just before we began the descent another lady in an immense and complicated turban arrived panting after us from an encampment far down among the fir-woods on the north side; she brought with her seven hard-boiled eggs and a paving-stone of bread which she insisted on presenting to us. We found afterwards that she was the only person in either the Kaying or the Chopkana valley who kept one or two hens. The Kirghiz are not poultry-keepers, as we knew, and on this visit to Kaying we took a coop of hens up with us for the table. One of these distinguished itself by laying an egg every morning in or near the bathroom of D.'s tent, so it was spared from the pot and presented on our departure to the lady of the hard-boiled eggs.

580 Arrived at Kaying Bashi, we pitched our tents in a spot which we had marked down the previous October as an ideal site for a summer camp, at the edge of the fir-forest two miles above the *aq-ois* in which we had then stayed. Here was a meadow of rich grass by the side of the glacier-stream, 10,400 feet above the sea, sheltered from below by a ridge covered with juniper and barberry and from above by a long tongue of tall firs stretching down from the main forest, with one grand tree, tallest of them all, standing out proudly at its tip. We were all merry as sand-boys when we had settled into camp that evening; D. and I because a dream had come true and we had gained our Happy Valley in spite of all obstacles; the servants because an enormous *aq-oi* was produced by the Kirghiz from the encampment a mile further up the valley, so that they had a palatial kitchen and servants' hall in which to gossip round the fire, in addition to the tents we had brought for them; Zakir Haji the carrier because of the luxuriant grass which carpeted the whole valley-bottom, on which his ponies were to graze free of charge for an indefinite period.

In this secluded Paradise of forest and river, of towering crag and pale-green hanging glacier, of woodland glade and lush meadow, of natural rock-gardens filled with a hundred different kinds of alpine flower, we spent a never-to-be-forgotten three weeks' holiday. It was extraordinary to think that a little Switzerland like this should have existed unsuspected among the very mountains through which, by several different routes, sportsmen and officials and explorers had travelled to and from Kashgar since the seventies. At first the weather was unsettled and rain fell most afternoons and sometimes all night. But we were snug enough in our

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sirkiang All

double-fly waterproof tents and had plenty to do "indoors"; moreover, it was nearly always brilliantly fine in the mornings. During the latter part of our time the weather improved and we had several perfect days.

There were so many delightful things to do that the time passed only too quickly. My primary object was, of course, exploration, and in particular the discovery of a way out of the valley to the west or south which would enable me to map and photograph the Shiwakte group and the eastern face of Qungur. With this in view I first made a large-scale plane-table sketch of the Kaying Jilgha and tributary glens, and then when the weather improved set to work trying at various points to climb the knife-edged ridges which enclosed the valley. The only pass of any kind that led out of the Kaying Jilgha in the direction of Qungur or the Shiwakte, I found, was a lofty *col* which the Kirghiz called the Kepek Pass, above the main Kaying glacier and to the south of the magnificent snow-peak, 19,400 feet high, which stood at the head of our valley. The Kirghiz told me that this *col* led over to grazing-grounds called Aghalistan in the upper Chimghan Jilgha, but that it could not be crossed even by unencumbered climbers until August when the worst of the ice had melted off it. Personal reconnaissance confirmed this statement. There was in fact at Kaying Bashi a young Kirghiz from Chimghan who had come by the route through the Qaratash gorges on a visit to Kaying in April; the water had come down before he was ready to go back, and he was thus cut off from his own valley only a few miles away until August, when he proposed to cross the Kepek Pass. I managed, however, to reach the top of the encircling ridges at two other points, each time after one or more preliminary failures. On these climbs I used to leave D. in charge of the faithful Hafiz and start off at 4 a.m. with Sangi Khan and a couple of Kirghiz carrying my plane-table, clinometer, cameras, sheepskin overcoat and lunch. We would set forth quietly, so as not to disturb the camp, into a night of velvety purple. Above us would tower spires and domes of blackness, but the snows would be scarcely visible in the starlight. Then slowly the purple would pale and a vision would take shape in the south, where the twin peaks of the great mountain at the head of the valley rose half-way to the zenith; at first it would be grey like a cathedral of granite and then, as the dawn touched it, glowing golden yellow against a pale luminous blue, clear-cut like a jewel fashioned of topaz and enamel. Then, as we rose out of the valley, the sunlight gilding the heights would come down to meet us, and our first halt would be on some flowery knoll among juniper thickets or on some cliff-top jutting out into the wide. Here, basking in the sun, we would smoke the matutinal cigarette while scanning the corries for ibex and discussing the climb before us.

Space and the limitations of my pen forbid a detailed description of these climbs or of the marvellous scenes which awaited my men and myself at the top of them. Three times we were held up by dangerous snow or unscaleable crags between 14,500 and 15,500 feet up, but twice we succeeded in reaching the point at which we aimed. Once, without the help of yaks, we attained a col on the Sarigh Yon ridge 15,600 feet above the sea. Here the thick snow cornice literally overhung a deep trough-like valley on the farther side, which I found to be the Tigarmansu Jilgha, a branch of the Gez Dara. It was a great disappointment to find that even from here the clear view of the whole eastern face of Qungur which I had confidently expected was still denied me; all except the top of the long massif was masked by a nearer range: But the mountain panorama which stretched round me from north-west to north-east was stupendous enough, and I spent hours perched on a small rock in the snow, working at my plane-table and taking panoramic photographs right round the horizon.

A week later, after two preliminary failures and a climb of 6,000 feet, I attained an even more commanding position, on the summit of the razor-like Zumurrat ridge three miles south-west of camp and 16,200 feet above the sea. It was the aiguilles of Zumurrat that overhung the Kaying forests so impressively and had been dubbed by us the "Cathedral Spires" on our first visit to Kaying. We rode or were towed by yaks most of the first half of this climb, but the last 2,000 feet were up the side of a most terrifying couloir filled with snow. It was one o'clock before we reached the col, and then I was rewarded by the finest mountain-view I have ever seen. Right opposite me in the west, only five or six miles away, stood a group of glorious mountains like colossal icebergs glittering in the sun, their sides clothed with hanging glaciers thousands of feet high. It was my first near view of the mysterious and inaccessible Shiwakte, and the sheer beauty of its four 20,000-foot peaks took my breath away. One of my objects was now in some measure attained, for I was able

PEAKS I, IIIa AND III OF SHIWAKTE GROUP FROM TOP OF SARIGH YON RIDGE
(*Telephotograph*)

[Face [p. 150]]

0-00 during the two hours I could allow myself at the top to fix the summits of the Shiwakte on my map, measure their height with the clinometer and photograph them. As for Qungur, all except the top of one of his 25,000-foot domes was hidden; but though I was once more disappointed of a near view of his eastern face, the observations I was now able to make of the above-mentioned dome proved afterwards of the greatest utility.

Coming down I had a somewhat alarming experience. Crossing a small ice-filled branch of the main couloir my foothold gave way and I shot down like an arrow from a bow for about 40 feet, landing quite comfortably in the deep snow of the main couloir, but receiving some slight bruises and scratches on the way. I may explain that though we carried a rope on these climbs, we hardly ever used it, for the simple reason that the Kirghiz neither knew how to use a rope in climbing nor trusted it when they had one; they knew their own home-made ropes too well and thought mine were the same. On this occasion there was no danger, except possibly of my starting an avalanche; this might have been serious the week before when we first tried the climb, but now there was not enough snow to make a dangerous avalanche. Two came down the couloir later in the afternoon, but they were not very serious affairs.

Besides these major climbs of mine, D. and I reconnoitred on yaks four or five different glaciers to a height of 14,000 feet or more, besides other expeditions. On these occasions we generally took the tea-basket, and each picnic-place that we found was more beautiful than the last. Scrambling up among the loose boulders of the lateral moraines was often very hard work indeed, but except when clouds shut down on us, as they sometimes did, it was always worth while. A side-valley called the Ghorumda which we ascended is typical of the region. You follow the stream up among picturesque clumps of tall firs and find unexpectedly that more than half of it bursts out of the ground from the midst of a fir-coppice at the foot of the ancient terminal moraine, which rises steeply above for a thousand feet or more covered with alpine flowers and juniper-scrub. At the top of the rise are pastures with two or three Kirghiz huts, and away behind curves the glacier-filled valley up to the great ribbed and fluted ice-walls of the main range. One of our favourite picnic-places was a glen whose crystal-clear stream issued from narrow "gates" in the steep hillside a couple of hundred yards from our camp.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

Clambering one day up its bed through a short winding gorge we found ourselves in a small park-like valley with grassy lawns, tall firs like church steeples and little firs like Christmas trees, junipers, willows, alders and actually the rowan-tree of Scotland. We christened the place " Glen Scotland " at once, for there were other Scottish things in it too; ferns, wild currants, bluebells (known to the Sassenach as harebells), huge thistles, billowing mosses and rain. Somehow, it rained twenty-five per cent. more in Glen Scotland than anywhere else, but when the sun shone it was more than twenty-five per cent. more beautiful. For there were flowers, flowers everywhere, filling every nook and cranny, anemones, larkspurs, columbines, dragon's head, vetches, primulas, gentians, campanulas, potentillas, violets blue and yellow, rock-roses, clematis, king-cups, blue and white forget-me-nots and hosts of others; and in the inmost recess of the glen, a lovely waterfall, a pure white column of water pouring over a fifty-foot cliff which said " Thus far shalt thou go and no further."

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER XI

THE PEOPLE OF THE HAPPY VALLEY

THE Kirghiz of a valley like Kaying are genuine 221 nomads, for they live almost entirely on their flocks 232 and herds and move their tents from place to place according to the season and the state of the grazing, just as do the Turki and Baluch tribes of Persia and Baluchistan. But whereas the latter cover large areas and have sometimes a hundred miles or more to travel from their summer to their winter grazings, the whole range of the Kaying Kirghiz is but ten miles from end to end. Their *yailāqs* or summer grazing-grounds are at the feet of the glaciers 11,500 to 12,000 feet above the sea; in April and May, and again in October and November, their tents are pitched where we first found them, at 9,000–9,500 feet, in the broadest part of the valley; their *qishlāq* or winter camping-place is at Bash Kupruk on the banks of the Qaratash just below its junction with the Kaying stream, 7,000 feet above the sea. The inhabitants of the adjoining Chopkana and Qaratumush Jilghas have even shorter distances between their summer and winter camping-grounds, seven and five miles respectively. Though no 631 Chinese official ever penetrated these barely-accessible glens, they are effectively under the jurisdiction of the Amban of Yangi Hissar, who exacts revenue through the Beg of the Qaratash Circle, our friend Sabit. The Beg is responsible to the District Magistrate for the collection of revenue and the maintenance of law and order; he in his turn relies on the *unbashis* or headmen (literally, heads of ten) of the different glens, himself visiting his circle only once or twice a year.[1]

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[1] The four divisions of the Qaratash Circle, together with the 651 (nominal) number of households in each for revenue purposes, are 162 as follows:

Qaratash, i.e. the main valley above the junction of the Chimghan with the main stream, 60 households.

[241] The Kirghiz of the Kaying valley cultivate only a few acres
of barley and eat little bread. Their staple food is milk and its
262 products, *katak* or sour cream and *qurut*, a kind of cheese.
In most tents you will also find a cauldron of *mach* brewing,
251 the soup containing flour and milk already mentioned. *Qurut*
is made by drying sour cream in goat-skins; the method is to hang the goat-skins full of cream about eight feet from the ground under a piece of cord netting stretched across the top of four posts. The netting keeps off eagles and hawks, while the height from the ground defeats dogs and other animals. When a Kirghiz is to be away from his home for a day or more, he takes with him for food a few balls of *qurut*, and supplements them with wild rhubarb and celery which he knows where to find on the mountain-side. Bread is made in solid lumps, the only leaven used being sour milk; the poorer families can seldom afford it, fortunately for their digestions. Meat is even more of a luxury; a sheep is only killed on great occasions, when the meat is boiled in large cauldrons, not roasted. Sometimes one of the *mergens* or hunters of the community succeeds in slaying an ibex hind with his ancient matchlock, and then there is great feasting.

438 A valley like Kaying is almost but not quite self-supporting.
Boots, Kashgar cotton cloth, muslin and coloured handker-
chiefs for the ladies, knives, etc., are bought by the men on
their rare expeditions to Yangi Hissar, or from the itinerant
[434] traders from the plains who visit the valley two or three times
during the season. The money for these purchases is found by the sale of such surplus local products as remain after the revenue and other demands of the Beg have been satisfied. These products include live stock, raw wool, rope and matting made of camel's or yak's hair, cheese, red fox pelts and ibex

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651 Chimghan, with Tersöze and other side-valleys, 60 households.
162 Khanterek, i.e. the main valley and its branches below the great gorge, including Kaying, Chopkana, Yapchan, etc., 30 households.
Terek Kichik (among the mountains on the east side of the Qaratash), 100 households.

The assessment of a typical division, the Chimghan, is as follows:
4 *saghins* of cheese, i.e. the output of 4 yaks in a year.
40 camel-hair ropes.
100 *charaks* of barley flour (1 *charak* 20 lbs.).
10 yaks or ponies to be lent for transport purposes whenever required.

Besides the above, the Beg exacts one sheep per household for himself; he receives no pay from the Chinese authorities.

horns.[1] The seven families at Kaying Bashi keep about 25 yaks, 10 ponies, 30 head of ordinary cattle and half a dozen camels, besides a few animals owned by the inhabitants of the side-glens of Sarigh Yon and Ghorumda. The total number of sheep and goats in the valley, I was told, is between 3,000 and 4,000. 438

There are no houses (*tām*) in the Kaying Jilgha, only a few shelters made of branches under trees or against overhanging rocks (*kotan*). The tents (*aq-oi*) used by the Kirghiz, though smaller and poorer, are similar to those described by Miss Sykes in the Russian Pamirs.[2] The average size and condition of the tents varies greatly in different regions; we found much larger and more elaborate ones in the neighbourhood of Little L. Qarakul in the Chinese Pamirs; those we saw in the Tien Shan north-east of Kashgar, again, were smaller and less ornate but more solid, with thicker layers of felts and not nearly so draughty. 342

A light tent like the *aq-oi* with a roof shaped like a flattened dome and covered with felts which are far from waterproof, even when sound, is quite unsuited to the wet and stormy climate of the Alps of Qungur. That the inhabitants should have kept to it, refusing to build houses for themselves like the Kirghiz of the Qizil Tagh, is a remarkable instance of tenacious adhesion to ancestral habits. They have one great advantage, however, over the inhabitants of the comparatively dry Pamirs; instead of the small quantities of dried plants and dung which are the only fuel to be had in the latter region, they have unlimited firewood of the best quality, fir, juniper, etc., all round them. In cold or wet weather you will always find a roaring fire in an *aq-oi*, and right welcome it is. The problem of keeping the circular aperture in the roof, which does [374]

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[1] A Kashgar dealer will pay as much as 2½ or 3 taels (6*s.* 8*d.*–8*s.*) for a first-class red fox skin; ibex and stag horns are used by the Chinese in the concoction of certain medicines and dopes. [435]

[2] "Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia," pp. 115–16. The figures given by Miss Sykes for the cost of an *aq-oi* are very much higher than in the Qaratash valley. I was told that the forty curved roof-poles and sections of trellis which compose the framework of an *aq-oi* cost 2 tengas (4*d.*) each, and the felts, when new, from 8 to 15 taels between them (21*s.* 4*d.*–£2). The camel-hair ropes and long strips of woollen webbing (*taghar*) with which the framework is bound together under the felts are all home-made, but could be bought for three or four taels; total say £2–£3. Probably Miss Sykes' figures include the carpets, screens, bolsters, etc., with which an *aq-oi* is furnished; these, if the owner is rich, may be worth large sums.

342 duty as a chimney, open during heavy rain is solved in an ingenious fashion. The felt cover is pulled almost but not quite over it; the corner of the felt opposite to the direction from which the rain is coming is then lifted on the end of a forked pole away from the rim of the "chimney," thus making a kind of vertical ventilator facing away from the rain. The other end of the forked pole is held firmly in mid-air by means of guy ropes attached to the sides of the tent. *Aq-ois* stand a gale very well, their shape being such that the higher the wind the more firmly the structure is pressed to the ground; I never heard of one being blown away. To make assurance doubly sure, however, a large stone is sometimes placed in the tent and the woodwork of the roof anchored to it by a rope.

The putting together of the *aq-ois* is always done by the women, who are remarkably quick about it. I have seen a large one put up by two girls in half an hour. A middle-sized *aq-oi* forms three camel- or yak-loads when taken down. For short distances it can be moved bodily by ten or twelve men, who range themselves round the *inside* of the structure and lift it at a given signal. As they cannot see where they are going, they have to be steered by some one outside.

353 The interior of a typical *aq-oi* is full of interest. A fire burns merrily in the middle and a cauldron of *mach* simmers gently upon it. Farthest from the door is the *ashkhana* or kitchen, screened off from the rest of the hut by gaily-coloured mats made of reeds tightly wound with dyed wool. In this sanctum the goodwife keeps her milk, cream and curds in vast wooden bowls; it is really a dairy, not a kitchen. Another arc of the circle is occupied by a row of very young lambs, which lie or stand tethered closely to a rope pegged down along the walls. In wet weather the young lambs, if any, are kept most of the day inside the tents; once when I took refuge for the night in an *aq-oi* and threw myself down upon the felt which had been spread for me, I was astonished to feel what I thought was a pillow under the top end of the rug move when I put my head on it; it was a solitary lamb, very woolly and very surprised. 352 Round the walls, from the convenient pegs provided by the upper ends of the trellis, hang all kinds of odds and ends; *bashtiks* or bright-hued saddle-bags of patchwork or painted leather, sieves, fur-rimmed hats, big balls of newly-spun wool, [534] skins full of curds, hatchets, *chapans* or quilted coats and so on. There will usually be a *dotar* or long-stemmed guitar made from [411] a gourd, and an ancient matchlock of immense length with a

forked rest attached to the barrel. A quarter of the circumference is occupied by a pile of rolled-up felts, bolsters and rugs; the wealth of the owners may be accurately gauged from the size of this pile, just as that of cottagers in a German forest may, according to Mark Twain, be judged by the dimensions of the manure-heap outside their door. 352

In some parts of the Chinese Pamirs the Kirghiz are said to be dying out, but I do not think this is the case among the Alps of Qungur. We found that few households contained less than two children; one woman had four and another told D. that she had had eight. Infant mortality is high, and the race is not prolific; if it were, the Malthusian problems raised would be insoluble in a country where the grazing, though excellent in quality, is strictly limited in quantity. But the Kirghiz of the Qaratash basin are by no means decadent or weakly, and the scanty population is, if anything, increasing. Considering their complete ignorance of hygiene and rules of diet, they are a remarkably healthy race, thanks no doubt to the open-air life they lead and to their avoidance of houses. The chief ailments D. came across in her amateur doctorings (which were enormously appreciated and had, so far as we knew, no fatal results) were skin diseases, indigestion and other stomach troubles, as well as running sores which looked in some cases as if they might be tuberculous. Some of the faces were pitted by small-pox, but not badly. It is interesting to note that the Qizil Tagh Kirghiz, who have given up tents and taken to houses, are subject to epidemics and are probably dying out. In one of the valleys of that region we passed a whole settlement which had been depopulated three years before by an epidemic of some fatal disease and was now deserted. Though the Kirghiz never wash, their *aq-ois* are as a rule carefully swept and free from vermin, and we seldom had any qualms about sleeping in them on occasion. 161 [165] 164 [515] [356]

The women, as has already been noticed, are frank, fearless, self-reliant and natural, in refreshing contrast to their Turki sisters, at any rate in the towns. 562

> "There is a sort of Scotch-ness about them" (says D. in one of her letters from Kaying Bashi), "a common-sense that is entirely lacking in the people of the plains. They love woolly gloves, muslin, mirrors, buttons, pins and so on because of their usefulness, not only because of their novelty, and would rather have enough plain stuff to make a dress or coat than the yard or two of bright-coloured satin which a Turki woman would immediately go for. . . . There is one extremely attractive and coquettish lady in this valley, but she is

562 the exception rather than the rule, and most of them simply treat the men as their equals, though perhaps finding them a little stupid!"

In the Chopkana Jilgha there was a Turki girl from Yangi Hissar married to a Kirghiz. D. noticed at once how different she was from the others, more sophisticated and not nearly so efficient. She was a fish out of water, poor girl, and not at all happy. The only specimen of a Turki-Kirghiz hybrid we came across was a youngish, unhealthy-looking little man called Tash Mulla who attached himself to us in the Yapchan Jilgha. He was rather too clever and pushing, and we did not like him as well as some of the pure Kirghiz.

462 The strength and hardiness of the women are astonishing. They are splendid workers, not only doing all the household work but milking the yaks, cows, sheep and goats, weaving the rugs and other woollen articles, making the rope, pitching and striking the *aq-ois* and performing many other duties. The men are inclined to be lazy and are fond of twanging the guitar until a late hour and lying abed of a morning. But they are wiry and capable of great exertions, and they do not by any means leave all the work to the women, as is usually said of the men in other Kirghiz communities. They are responsible for the cultivation of the barley-fields, as well as for the safety of the flocks and herds on the mountain-side. Anyone who thinks that Kirghiz men enjoy a sinecure can try looking after thirty self-willed yaks or a couple of hundred sheep on a grazing-ground 5,000 feet from top to bottom and pitched at an angle of forty-five degrees.

136 There could be no more interesting hunting-ground for the naturalist than these narrow but well-watered and sheltered valleys, islanded between the belt of utterly barren foothills on one side and the snowy wastes of the great ranges on the other. There must have been many interesting local variations, possibly even new species, among the plentiful fauna of the Kaying Valley alone, had we but possessed the knowledge and skill to collect them. Snow leopards exist, but fortunately for the Kirghiz are uncommon; one killed a yak calf and ten sheep just before we arrived in June 1923. I saw several herds of ibex; it was hard not to be able to go after them, but a man cannot serve two masters and I had to choose between the delights of the chase and the sterner but more fruitful cult of the plane-table. Wolves exist in some of the valleys, but the Kirghiz had cleared Kaying of them. Red foxes, as I have already mentioned, are occasionally trapped,

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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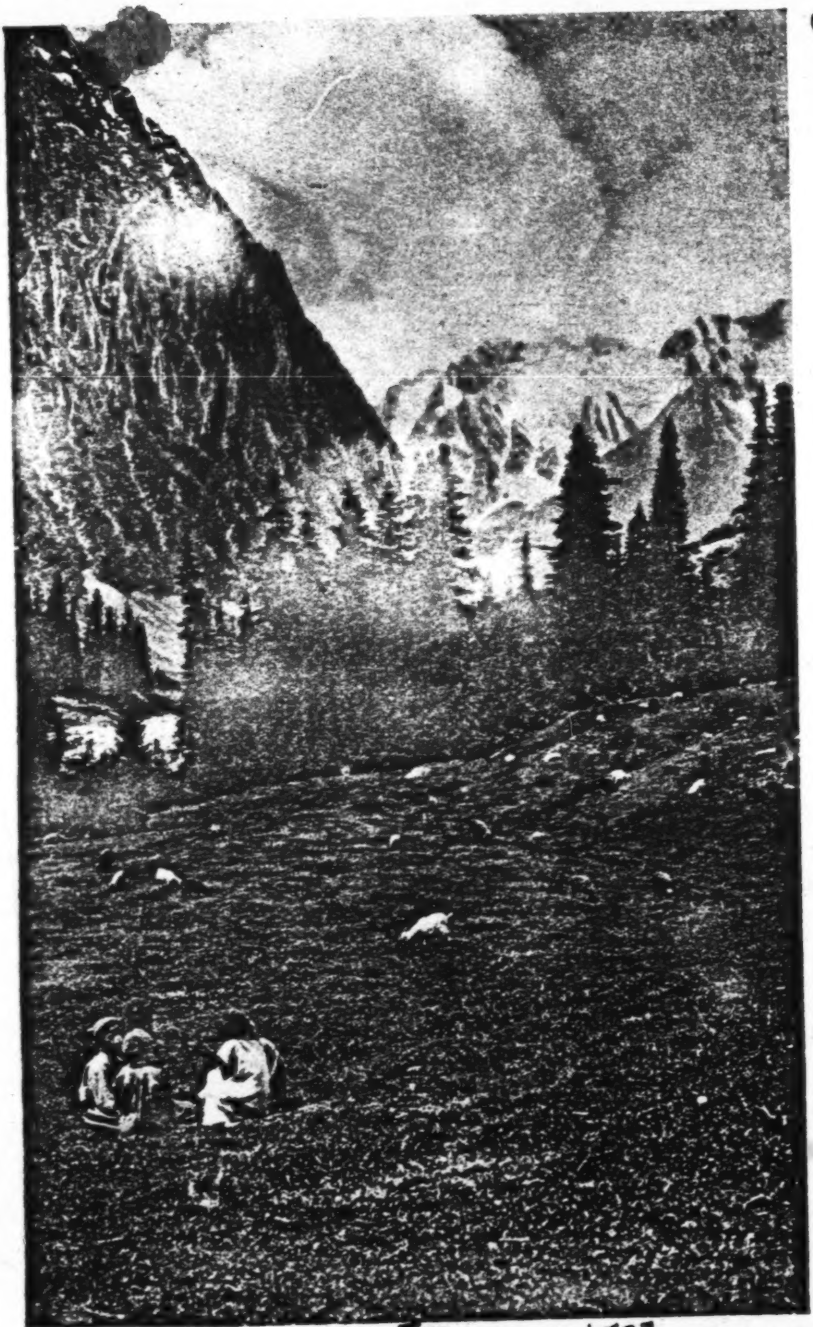

SUMMER AT KAYING BASHI

[Face p. 158]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

136 and we saw plenty of golden marmots at a height of 12,000 feet. A curious rodent about the size of a guinea-pig lived in the fir-forest at 11,000 feet, also a very small red stoat. Hares were plentiful among the juniper woods at 10,000 feet. The highest point at which I found animal life was 16,000 feet, where I saw running about on the snow a small eight-legged spider which is probably the same as that seen by the climbers of Mount Everest at an immense altitude. I also noticed a minute animal like a lizard about an inch long on the moraine of the Torbashi Glacier at 14,500 feet. Birds also are well represented, and include the black eagle, several kinds of hawk, red-legged partridge, Tibetan snow-cock, chough, raven, long-tailed magpie, rock-pigeon and many of the common small birds of northern Europe.

137 I have already spoken of the amazing profusion of wild flowers which in June and July turned the terminal moraines of the glaciers, as well as the marshes, meadows and forest glades into veritable gardens. We did as much amateur botanizing as our other pursuits and our total ignorance of botany permitted. In the course of our two summer visits to Kaying Bashi we pressed some thirty-seven varieties and secured the seeds of seven or eight. D. also painted most of the prettier ones in water-colours. The flower that excited us most was a sweet-smelling kind of crawling purple stock, which grew only in small isolated patches among the loose stones of glacier moraines between 13,000 and 14,000 feet above the sea, by far the highest-growing flower we found. On our return to England we presented our small collection to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. To a layman, the interesting thing about it, according to the Kew experts, was that it belonged to a distinctly Central Asian rather than a Himalayan type, although the valleys in question are only about 180 miles as the crow flies from similar regions in Northern Kashmir, the flora of which is Himalayan. Like most of the flowers, the conifers of the Alps of Qungur belong to the Tien Shan rather than to the Himalayas; with the exception of the small fir-woods seen by us in the Qizil Tagh and heard of in one or two places in the Yarkand River valley, they mark the extreme south-eastern limit of the Tien Shan fir (*Picea schrenkiana*). For twelve hundred miles eastward, the whole length of the great Kunlun and Altyn Tagh Ranges, not a fir-tree is to be found; then come the forests of the Nan Shan, which flourish under moisture-laden winds from the far Pacific.

A week before the end of our stay we proclaimed a *jour de*
526 *fête* and invited all the Kirghiz of the Kaying and adjoining valleys to a feast. About twenty women came, some of them carrying babies over dizzy heights and through roaring torrents, and a similar number of men. The proceedings were opened by eight of the men playing an exhibition game of *oghlak* in our honour on the wide meadows half a mile below our camp. This game, also called *baigu* and (by the Afghans) *buzkashi* or "goat-pulling," is a kind of Rugby football on horseback played "all gainst all," with the headless carcase of a freshly-killed goat as the ball. It is seldom played except in honour of some distinguished visitor, who acts as umpire and pays for the goat. The umpire indicates a flat-topped rock or a mark on the ground as the goal; the players struggle among themselves for possession of the "ball," and whoever is successful dashes off with it across his saddle. The others chase and jostle him until he drops it; one of them, leaning right out of the saddle, succeeds in picking it up and the process is repeated. The object is to throw the "ball" on to the goal, and whoever does this oftenest wins the game.[1]

During the play we noticed that our lady guests sat by themselves in a picturesque group on the hillside some distance away; it seemed that according to Kirghiz custom women and children are not allowed to watch *oghlak* being played. After the game we all trooped back through the woods to camp, led by the winner with the goat as the prize of victory
000 at his saddle-bow. Since the previous afternoon the Kaying Bashi women had been baking bread in their tents at our expense; three sheep—one for the ladies and two for the men—had been stewing half the morning in big cauldrons brought down from the encampment for the purpose, and tea by the kerosene-tinful had been brewing on our kitchen fire. The ladies and children sat in a ring on mats and felts near D.'s tent, while the men under my charge formed a separate circle on the grass thirty yards away. D. had cornered all the tea-cups and wooden soup-bowls in the valley for her guests, but the men did not mind; each one whipped off his waistband and spread it in front of him as his *dastarkhwan* or tablecloth, and waited for one of the orderlies or myself to heap upon it his share of the savoury contents of the cauldrons. Mean-

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[1] For a detailed description of this game as played in the Chinese Pamirs, see Miss Sykes, "Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia."

while the ladies were already tucking into the liberal helpings 600 of bread and mutton handed round by D. and Ahmad Bakhsh, washed down by bowl after bowl of tea rich with sugar and the milk of yaks. Some of them had brought special contributions to the feast in the shape of strange fried pastries, which they shared with their friends. One good lady from Chopkana amused us by unfolding a large handkerchief full of a kind of small fried buns; the others were about to fall upon it, when she snatched it up and said, pointing to the men's party, "No! This is for the *other* guests!" So the fried buns were borne off in triumph for the men, to the delight of the proud donor. When all was finished except the titbits which some of the ladies tied up in their red handkerchiefs for the children they had left at home, photographs were taken and the women adjourned in a body to D's. tent for medicines and initiation into the mysteries of the toilet-table. The men, after cigarettes and a suitable interval for digestion, spent an uproarious evening running wheel-barrow and three-legged races, cockfighting and competing in various other novel sports.

The marriage customs of the Kirghiz inhabiting these 584 remote and secluded valleys of the Kashgar Range differ in some respects from those described by previous writers in connexion with the less isolated and therefore probably less primitive Kirghiz of Russian Central Asia. It may therefore be of interest to record the information I obtained regarding them, both at Kaying and at the wedding party which, as already described, we attended in the upper Qaratash valley the previous April. The position as regards marriage among these mountain people is exactly the reverse of that found among the Turkis of the plains. At Kashgar women are at a discount, wives are cheap and divorce even cheaper. Among the Kirghiz, on the other hand, girls are at a premium and a would-be bridegroom or his father has to pay a heavy bride-price, which usually varies between ten and thirty yaks or their equivalent in other kinds of live stock. Ordinarily, when a boy has reached the age of six or seven and may therefore be expected to survive till manhood (infant mortality is no lower among the Kirghiz than it is among the Turkis) his parents betroth him to some neighbour's daughter of about the same age. This transaction, known as the *qalam*, is usually the result of long haggling about the bride-price, in which the female relatives of both parties play a leading part. Suppose

584 the price is fixed at ten yaks; the boy's father pays a first
annual instalment of one yak, the girl's father gives the boy
in return a shirt or a coat as a token of the betrothal, and
the *qalam* is complete. It may, however, be broken off at
585 any time before the *nikah* by mutual consent, in which case the
instalments paid are refunded. When all the yaks have been
paid and the young couple have reached the ages of, say, four-
teen and sixteen years respectively, the bride's people invite all
the neighbours to a feast at which the marriage is announced.
The bride and bridegroom do not attend this "wedding break-
fast," remaining in their tents in the background all day. The
feast and announcement, known as the *nikah*, constitute the
591 wedding, there being no other ceremony. The bridegroom,
585 however, cannot yet take his bride away to his own home.
She continues to live for a period varying from two to five months with her parents, during which time the latter make and furnish an *aq-oi* with its felts, rugs, wall-hangings, screens, pots, pans, cushions, milk-bowls and other appurtenances complete for the young people. During this period the bridegroom lives at his own home if near, otherwise in an *aq-oi* lent him by the bride's parents, and visits the bride every week or ten days. These visits are supposed to be kept secret from her father, who must not see the bridegroom entering or leaving the bride's tent. During the whole of this period the bridegroom must never appear before his father-in-law unless he is wearing his caps and boots and has his stick in his hand, as if he were a stranger from afar. At this stage if the bride is unfaithful (but not otherwise) the bridegroom's father can demand the price back and break off the match. When the *aq-oi* is finished, the bridegroom takes it and the bride away to his own place, on which occasion some show of resistance is made by the girl's relations—an obvious survival of the marriage by capture idea. After a year (not before) the wife can "give a divorce" to her husband by returning him the price paid for her—exactly the reverse of what happens in the plains, where it is the husband who (if he likes) "gives" a divorce to his wife.

600 At last the time came to bid the Happy Valley and our Kirghiz friends a sad farewell; for we did not expect to be able to visit it again the following year before going down the road to India, as we eventually did. We did not, however, return to the plains by the way we had come. Old Samsaq Bai, the Kirghiz who had come to our rescue on the way up and

had guided us over the Aqsai Pass, came one day to Kaying Bashi and invited us to his camp at Bozarga in the Yapchan Valley, which he said was a more beautiful *yailāq* than Kaying. I did not believe him, nor could I quite make out where his place was, but the chance of breaking new ground was too good to be missed. Sending our caravan down to Khanterek to wait for us, we took with us two orderlies and four yak-loads of baggage and set off on 15th July across the Chopkana Pass with our old friend. The march was an arduous but most exciting one. After crossing the pass, instead of descending the Chopkana Valley we kept round to the left, diving into a deep glen and climbing out of it again. Then we traversed for several miles the steep northern face of Yelpaktash, the three great crags of which, 13,000–14,000 feet high, towered above us on the left. We were now climbing along the back of the knife-edge ridge which shuts the Kaying Valley in from the north. In some places the trail crossed unpleasant rocky outcrops, in others the muddy tracks of recent landslides, where the whole mountain-face, forests and all, seemed in a state of unstable equilibrium; elsewhere again the path, level and well engineered, led through pleasant forest glades for all the world as if we were among the Simla Hills. At last we came out on the beautiful "alp" of Yapchan Yailāq,[1] where grassy knolls knee-deep in flowers jutted out from the steep fir-clad flank of Kök Döng. Below, a deep and narrow gorge wound away down to the invisible Qaratash. This gorge, they told us, was impassable by man or beast, the only access to the head of the Yapchan Valley being by the roundabout way we had come. Right opposite us towered almost perpendicular crags of deep-red sandstone 1,500 feet high, crowned with fir-forest. Further progress on our side was impossible, for the woods ended abruptly in an abyss a thousand feet deep and about half a mile broad, the gash made by an immense landslide in past ages. But Samsaq took us down a steep zigzag track among dense thickets of briar rose into the depths of the gorge till we came to the meeting-place of two white torrents; fording one and scrambling up the boulders at the side of the other we found ourselves opposite a cleft in the apparently overhanging red sandstone cliffs. The place seemed a perfect cul-de-sac; if we had not known that Kirghiz lived up there and that this was the only route, we would not have believed it possible to go further. Samsaq took us across the stream and we crawled up a muddy zigzag path, hanging on to the tails of the yaks, right up to a kind of immense alcove in the precipice. Here surely, we thought, must be the end; but our cunning old guide led the way along a ledge, invisible from below, by which we traversed the overhanging cliffs and found ourselves in a steep and narrow but fairly straightforward gully. Further up we came to masses of wild rose and clematis with clumps of fir and a spring of sweet water, until at last, 2,000 feet above the bottom of the Yapchan gorge and 11,500 feet above the sea, we saw the *aq-ois* of Samsaq and his large family above us on a grassy knoll against a background of forest.

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[1] Nothing to do with Yapchan village on the Kashgar-Yangi Hissar road.

The ladies made us welcome and D. was soon installed in the *aq-oi* that had been vacated for us. While she set to work preparing the dinner on a couple of spirit-stoves, I took my plane-table out (I had made a rough "route traverse" the whole way from the Chopkana Pass) and fixed the position of the camp from the top of a neighbouring ridge. Opposite me, to the south, was the sword-point of Kōk Dōng, nearly 17,000 feet high; around and below, a beautiful Alpine country of green ridges and fir-crowned red sandstone crags enclosing wooded glens; to the east, vistas of grey-brown peaks and hills descending, tier after tier, to the plains which stretched away to the north-east, flecked with patches of cultivation like the desert with cloud-shadows. That evening in our *aq-oi* D. proudly served a dinner consisting of soup, fricassee of chicken and a sweet omelette, while round us in the warm still air sheep bleated, yaks grunted, ponies whinnied and a Kirghiz in one of the tents above twanged his guitar and sang an endless song.

Hearing that an easy pass called the At Bel ("Pass of the Horse") led over the ridge behind the camp into the Tigarmansu Jilgha—the same trough-like glen filled with forest into which I had peered from the top of the heights above Kaying Bashi—I decided to halt a day at Bozarga and reconnoitre it. That night, however, a tremendous storm of wind and rain came on which put surveying and photography out of the question and kept us prisoners in our leaky and draughty *aq-oi* the whole of the next day. It was disappointing to have come so far for the pleasure of sitting wrapped up in rugs and waterproofs all day, but knowing the climate we did not despair. While I pored over

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

PEAK I OF SHIWAKTE GROUP, FROM 1,600 FEET COL BETWEEN TORBASHI GLACIER (UPPER KAYING JILGHA) AND HEAD OF TIGARMANSU JILGHA ~~[illegible]~~

[Face p 164]

my map on the plane-table, plotting-in elusive mountain-peaks and struggling with recalcitrant contour-lines, D. conjured happily with saucepan and spirit-lamp, producing meal after meal with the most praiseworthy ingenuity. She also held her usual " sick parade " outside the hut in spite of the rain, dispensing her three or four stock medicines, rubbing sore infants and advising anxious mothers on the subject of diet. Peering once with a shiver through the doorway I saw her walled in by a picturesque crowd of women in many-coloured costumes and immense turbans, marshalled by the good-humoured Hafiz, and hoped at least that they were keeping the rain off her. Nothing would induce her to come in until something had been done for everybody. One lady had come all the way from the Qaratumush Jilgha, beyond Kaying, carrying a child; in two days she had crossed three passes, one of them a snow-clad knife-edge of rock 15,000 feet high, and had forded four torrents—all in order to consult D. as to how she could be sure of having some more children!

As we had expected, next day (17th July) was brilliantly fine with the air washed clear as crystal and the colours of meadow and flower, red crag and dark green fir-coppice positively startling in their vividness. It was cruel to have to leave it all and plunge down into the barren maze of foothills which lay between us and the plains. Before starting for Saman where our caravan awaited us we climbed 1,500 feet to the top of the Zor Qir (" Great Ridge ") behind the camp, from which we looked down upon the grassy saddle of the At Bel (12,000 feet) and caught a glimpse of *aq-ois* on green lawns far down the further side. The beauty of the scene was indescribable, and we longed to bask in the sun on the top of the " Great Ridge " till evening. But though I secured some most useful " rays," I was disappointed to find that the view I sought of Qungur's eastern face was still denied me; only the top of his eastern dome peered at us over the 17,000-feet ridge which encloses the Tigarmansu Jilgha from the north.

It was past noon before we tore ourselves away from our mountain-top, and in order to make Saman before nightfall we had to hurry along the switchback trail to the Chopkana jilgha. Here we found our riding-ponies awaiting us by arrangement and sent back Samsaq's yaks. The old man had begged us not to take them the whole way down to Saman; the Kirghiz never bring their yaks below about 9,000 feet in summer if they can possibly help it.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

Next day when we crossed the Aqsai Pass—a much easier task from the north than from the south—it was again brilliantly clear. While the loads were being man-handled down the breakneck north side of the col I put up my plane-table for the last time. Though we were but 9,400 feet up, as against 13,000 the previous morning, we enjoyed a better view of mighty Qungur and its satellites, as well as of Chakragil, than we had had from Zor Qir. There, we had been too close to the high mountains to see them properly; here, at a distance of 24 to 26 miles, intervening hillocks of sixteen or seventeen thousand feet sank into insignificance. The Shiwakte group with its sheaf of needle peaks pierced the sky like the mountains in a fairy story; in bulk, indeed, though not in beauty, they were dwarfed by the gigantic mass of Qungur, which for nearly 10 miles of its length is nowhere less than 23,000 feet high.[1]

In the evening we forded the seven channels of the Qaratash above Altunluk and slept the sleep of the just in the apricot-orchard of the same Yuzbashi who had tried so hard to dissuade us from our mad attempt to reach Kaying Bashi in the high-water season. With the help of the tarantass, which met us at Akhtur Bazar, we made short work next day of the remaining 35 miles, and the same evening we were revelling once more in the green glooms and luscious fruits of Chini Bagh.

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[1] For the fine telepanorama of the Qungur Massif secured on this occasion, see "Geographical Journal," November, 1925.

CHAPTER XII

ARCHÆOLOGY, ART, LEGENDS AND SUPERSTITIONS

> Nous admirons l'Asie bien que sa sagesse ne puisse rien nous apprendre, pour la même raison qui pousse les Américains à visiter l'Europe ; parce que nous avons besoin de retrouver, d'admirer, de sauver les restes des vieilles civilisations qualitatives, que nous détruisons impitoyablement tous les jours pour augmenter notre richesse et notre puissance.
>
> C'est la tragédie du monde moderne ; on ne le répétera jamais assez. Les vieilles civilisations qualitatives, qui avaient pour but la perfection et non la puissance, sont notre paradis perdu.
>
> '. . . On trouve encore en Asie ce qu'on ne trouve presque plus en Europe, des restes *vivants* de ce grand passé : mœurs, traditions, méthodes d'éducation, vertus.
>
> GUGLIELMO FERRERO

THE traveller who enters Chinese Turkistan for the 144 first time from the south cannot fail to be impressed by the fairness of complexion and almost European cast of features displayed by many of the inhabitants, compared with the populations he has left behind him in Kashmir and Upper India. It has, indeed, been proved from the anthropological materials collected by Sir A. Stein that the race which inhabits the Tarim Basin still retains a large proportion of the fine *Homo alpinus* type.[1] This, it is true, is found in its purity only in a few secluded mountain regions, notably among the Tajiks of the Sarikol Valley and the Taghliks or "mountaineers" of Pakhpo near the head-waters of the Tiznaf River.[2] On the plains, and especially in districts such as Kashgar and Aqsu which lie on the "highway of the nations," there is a noticeable admixture of Turkish and Mongol blood. Still, on the whole it may be said that the prevailing type among the dwellers in the oases on the western

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[1] "Geographical Journal," June, 1925, p. 495.

[2] Stein, "Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. I, p. 150.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AIl Sinkiang AIl

144 and southern fringe of the Takla Makan Desert is the same as that still found among the valleys of the Italian Alps and the Caucasus—found, too, by Stein in the third-century graves of Loulan at the eastern end of the Tarim Basin.

I have already referred in Chapter V to the illustration afforded by Kashgaria of the racial continuity and persistence of a population firmly rooted in the soil, especially when the extreme fertility of that soil depends entirely upon an elaborate system of irrigation. This permanence is in striking contrast with the state of perpetual change and flux which has through the ages characterized the history of Central Asia as a whole. Throughout the vast spaces of Mongolia, Dzungaria and Turkistan the winds of migration and conquest have swept to and fro; from the Gobi Desert to the Euxine, from Châlons to the Yellow Sea, the great nomad peoples, Hun and Turk and Mongol, have ransacked the world in the lust of dominion and the search for new grazings. Over the Tarim Basin, too, they have passed time after time, but they have left little impress upon it. The reason is not far to seek: With a rainfall of but two or three inches per annum, the grass that pastoral peoples need scarcely exists.

> "Nature" (says Stein) "by denying grazing-grounds to the vast basin between Kunlun and Tien Shan, has protected it against ever becoming the scene of great migratory movements and of such upheavals as are bound to accompany them." [1]

It is the aridity of its climate, then, as well as the seclusion afforded by some of the greatest mountain ranges of the planet, that has preserved the population of the Tarim Basin relatively intact since the dawn of its history in the second century before Christ. But it is not this continuity alone that lends such exceptional interest to the history of the
177 region. There are people with as high a lineage in other secluded parts of Asia and Europe. The peculiar feature of the history of the Tarim Basin is the fact that throughout a vast period of historical time it served as the channel through which the ancient civilizations of China on the one side and of Persia and India on the other maintained contact and to an appreciable extent reacted upon each other.

176 From the second century before Christ to the eighth century of our era there flourished in these oases a civilization in which, though it was predominantly Indo-Scythian, cultural

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[1] "Geographical Journal," May, 1925, p. 403.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

influences from the China of the Han and Tang Emperors mingled with those transmitted through Iran and North-West India from the great world of Hellenism in the West. It was through the channel of the Tarim Basin and the medium of its settled populations that the fame of the "silk-weaving Seres" and the fine products of Chinese looms reached the Mediterranean and became known throughout the Roman Empire. It was by this same route that the elements of Indian as well as of Græco-Roman art and culture reached China's western borders. More important still, it was along the Khotan road that Buddhism, in Stein's words "India's greatest contribution to the spiritual development of mankind," found its roundabout way in the first century of our era to China through the Central Asian kingdoms. 175

It would be presumption for me to attempt even the briefest survey of the immense field covered by the archæological discoveries of Sir Aurel Stein among the sands of the Takla Makan and elsewhere in Chinese Turkistan and Kansu. I can but refer the art-loving reader to those monuments of fascinating if recondite erudition, "Ruins of Desert Cathay," "Serindia," and the rest. Here will be brought vividly before his eyes the splendour of Khotan's Græco-Buddhist civilization, in the days when that ancient kingdom was culturally an Indian colony.[1] He will discover for himself how exquisitely that civilization was tinged by the classic art of China; he will see, on the other hand, how in the east of the province and along the great Silk Road the powerful influences of Græco-Buddhist and even of purely Persian art modified the work of Chinese masters. The frescoes of Miran, the classical seals of Yotkan, the relievos of Khadaliq, the wood-carvings of Niya, the amazing painted silks, brocades, tapestries and embroideries of the Cave of the Thousand Buddhas—these and many other beautiful things appeal to the lover of art, and not to him alone. They appeal even more strongly to the Western student of *les vieilles civilisations qualitatives,* as Ferrero calls them, which aimed at perfection rather than progress or power—the old civilizations which we have so ruthlessly destroyed in our pursuit of wealth and our conquest of the earth, and which now, too late, we find to be our lost Paradise. 114

My few excursions into this field of research may be dismissed briefly. In the course of long tours on Consular duty, when our programme had to be thought out carefully beforehand 172

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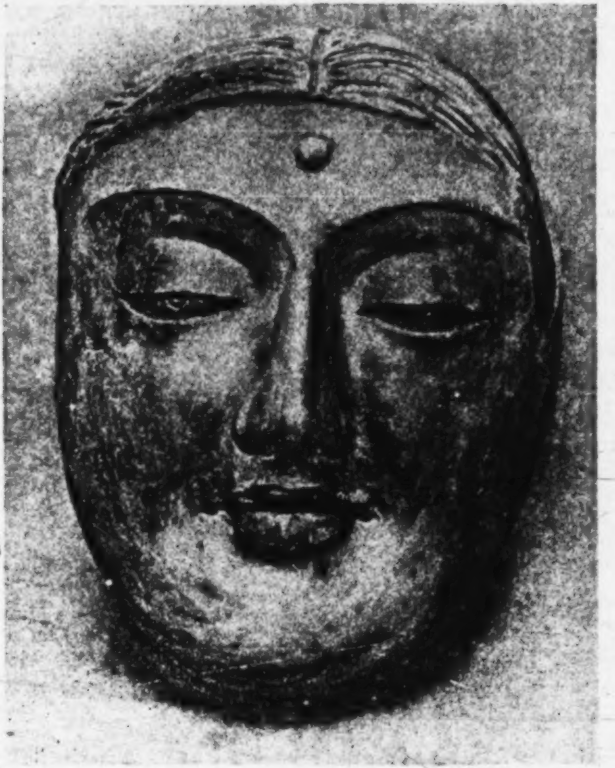
[1] "Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. I, p. 290–91.

172 and the time spent on the road and at towns reduced to a minimum in order that the ground might be covered, it would have been impossible for me to attempt any excavation or systematic clearing of new sites, even if I had wished to disregard Sir Aurel's injunction not to "dig up tombs." North of Domoko on the Khotan-Keriya road, in the wilderness of tamarisk-cones on the edge of the great desert, we found after a long search Sir Aurel's "Khadaliq" site, and photographed it in order to ascertain the extent to which it had been silted up by drift-sand since excavation. On our second visit to Keriya, in April, 1924, a British subject called Abbas Khan brought me two fine specimens of ancient weaving-combs, heavy wooden instruments with a row of short teeth with which carpet-weavers "pack" the pile on the warp, also a recumbent angel in stucco in excellent condition and some very fragmentary leaves of Kharosthi manuscript. He said he had taken these from an ancient site he had discovered the previous year one "potai" (2½ miles) north of Stein's Khadaliq site. He described a loess mound or hill "a hundred *gaz* high" (200 feet—an obvious exaggeration), in which he had dug to a depth of about 12 feet, with great difficulty, as the earth was continually collapsing on top of him; he had then come to a chamber with plaster frescoes on all four walls and the roof supported by wooden columns. As he worked three of the walls collapsed and the frescoes were destroyed, but the fourth remained in position. It contained a picture 3 feet by 2 feet showing men on horses, etc. Other finds were a large mill-stone, too heavy to be turned by hand, and a big earthenware pot with two handles, full of bones, some charred. This latter was found in the mound 3 feet outside the chamber. Abbas Khan's measurements were probably very far out, but there is no reason to suppose that his story was an invention, for he was very anxious that I should go with him and see the place on our return journey. Unfortunately we had already arranged to go home by another route, so that I had no opportunity of examining Abbas Khan's new site.

At Khotan our Armenian friend, Mr. Keraken Moldovack, and the ex-Aqsaqal Khan Sahib Badruddin Khan allowed me to take for presentation to the British Museum a selection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts, Greek plaster masks, terracotta figurines and appliqué ornaments, intaglios, vases, paintings on wood and stucco, wooden household implements, coins and other objects collected by them from "Taklama-

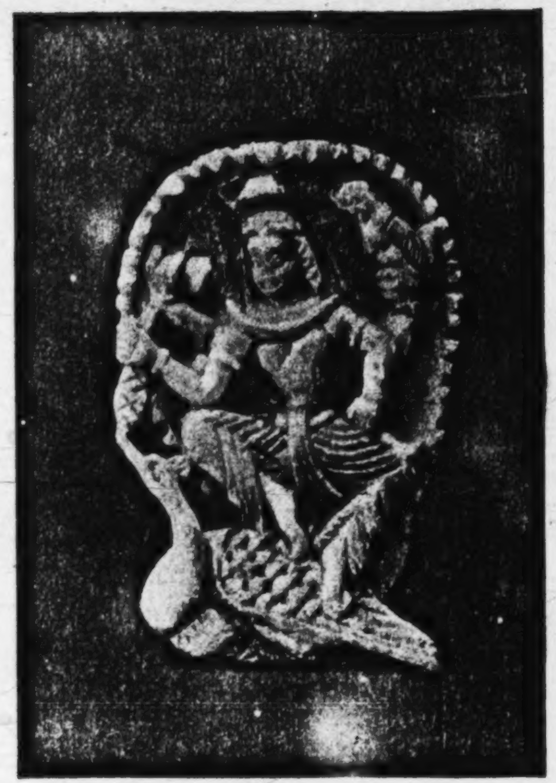
3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

[Face p. 170]



PLASTER HEAD OF WOMAN FOUND UNDER SANDS OF TAKLA MAKAN DESERT NEAR KHOTAN [*p.* 171

(About ½ actual size)



SOAPSTONE FIGURE OF SARASWATI AND HER PEACOCK FOUND IN RECENTLY EXPOSED CULTURE-STRATUM AT YOTKAN (Actual size) [illegible]

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kanchis" who had brought them back from various desert sites.[1] Our most interesting excursions, however, were in November, 1922, and May, 1924, when we visited the site of Yotkan, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Khotan, some five miles south-west of the modern town. A few months before our first visit a great mass of loess bluff some 20 feet high had fallen away owing to erosion by irrigation water, and had laid bare a new section of the Yotkan "culture stratum" from 2 feet 3 inches to 5 feet 4 inches thick, lying at an average depth of 15 feet below the upper level of the fields. The composition of this stratum was of a stiff bluish clay, and its contents consisted chiefly of potsherds, animal bones, lumps of charcoal, coins and small metal objects corroded almost out of recognition, fragments of white jade, red and green glass and so on. But more valuable and interesting objects had also been found by the treasure-seekers who had been washing the clay of the stratum for gold most of the summer. In this place where "trippers" were unknown it did not seem to occur to these people that we might be ready to buy curios found by them during their washings for gold in the stratum, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that we induced them to bring along a few articles they had found. Anything containing gold or precious stones, good jade, etc., had of course been sold in the Khotan bazaar long before, but we succeeded in buying from the villagers a few objects of interest. Of these the best were a beautiful little soapstone figure of the goddess Saraswati and her peacock, a couple of carnelian intaglios and some quaint clay animals.

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[1] This small collection, including objects bought at the Yotkan site, at Goma and elsewhere, is at present in the Ethnographical section of the British Museum. The most interesting items are: Twenty-six folios of calligraphic paper MS. in Central-Asian Brahmi of the *Saddharma-pundarika*, a Sanskrit text, one folio of which appears in Dr. Hoernle's "Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature"; eleven folios of an eighth-century Buddhist religious work in ancient Khotanese; wooden tablets inscribed with accounts and other documents in Kharosthi; two beautiful plaster masks of female faces in classical Greek style; small intaglios from rings; two square metal seals, one with a classical winged bull intaglio, the other with Chinese lapidary characters similar to the impression of the Chinese official's seal shown in "Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. I, Plate 95 (6); several well-preserved fragments of coloured frescoes illustrating Buddhist legends, similar to those found by Stein at Miran; household implements such as wooden combs, fire-sticks, "hearths," etc., and copper coins of the Han and Tang dynasties.

Turning to more modern times, it must be confessed that Chinese Turkistan is poor in arts and crafts compared with other Muhammadan countries such as Persia, Turkey or Kashmir. The reason is not far to seek. In these latter countries the progressive decay of taste and craftsmanship which marked the nineteenth century has been delayed and in some cases arrested by the commercial enterprise of the West. Close contact with the markets of Europe and America has maintained or renewed the standard, both in quality and in quantity, of the carpets of Persia and Turkey, the ornamental metalwork of Isfahan, the shawls of Kashmir and many other fine products of Oriental craftsmanship.[1] The length and difficulty of the few trade-routes connecting the Tarim Basin with the rest of the world have prevented any such maintenance or renaissance of its arts and crafts, and little of artistic value is produced at the present day. As recently as the middle of last century, however, the old skill survived; and though during the twenty years which preceded the War, Jewish and Armenian dealers did not neglect the bazaars and pawnshops of Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan and even Keriya, it is still 531 possible to pick up beautiful old carpets and ornamental metal-work, embroideries and other *objets d'art.*

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[1] A striking instance of this is the case of the Persian carpet industry, which towards the end of last century was threatened with ruin as a result of the introduction of German aniline dyes. Modern Persian carpets began to acquire a bad name in the markets of Constantinople and New York for the crude and fugitive synthetic colours used. Had this process been allowed to continue, irreparable harm would have been done, for the secrets of the old vegetable dyes would have been lost. A generation of weavers would have grown up which knew not where to look for the old herbs nor how to decoct them when found. But action was taken in time. Under pressure from the foreign interests involved, the Persian Government imposed a prohibitive export duty on aniline-dyed carpets; the great Armenian and Levantine firms which supply the markets of the West co-operated, and the situation was saved. Nowadays the colours of a Persian carpet are as fast as in the days of Shah Abbas, and it is only necessary when bargaining for one to murmur disparagingly "*rang-i-jauhari*" or "*masnu'i*" (artificial dye) to cause the would-be seller to burst forth into a torrent of indignant protestations. No such measures, alas, have been taken by the Chinese, with the result that the carpet-weaving industry of Yurungkash, Lop and other villages in the Khotan district is hopelessly debased. Not only are the natural dyes used until thirty years ago forgotten, but the beautiful old flower-patterns are seldom used, being replaced by unspeakably hideous modern Chinese designs of mauve tigers and magenta teapots. Only one manufacturer, all honour to him, keeps to the designs and colour-schemes of Persia, and that is Mr. Moldovack, whom I have already mentioned. Even he cannot dispense with aniline, for most of the old vegetable dyes have disappeared.

In the course of some five years' service between Quetta 286 and Kerman I had collected a number of specimens and acquired a little experience of the carpet-weaving industry 531 of South-East Persia and Afghanistan, and I was therefore specially interested in the corresponding industry which had flourished for centuries at Khotan, or rather at Yurungkash and Lop near that town. Ninety-five per cent. of the specimens brought us were in bad condition, with the pile in many places worn right away, and we acquired only three of the genuine old Khotan flower-pattern rugs, together with about half a dozen pieces of more recent though still pre-aniline weave. Of the former the best, which measures 8 feet by 5 feet, is a fine specimen of the work of a hundred years or more ago. Its design is a most interesting mixture of Persia and China. The whole treatment—conventional flowers symmetrically arranged on a monochrome ground and enclosed in a broad-banded border—is unmistakably Persian; while the *besh gul* or five-rose *motif*, consisting of a straight stalk with three roses on one side and two on the other, though not (so far as I know) found in Persian or Turkish carpets, still belongs to the same *genre*. But many of the other details are Chinese, such as the wave- and key-patterns in the border and the *fleur-de-lis* interspersed in symmetrical groups of four among the roses.

The same blending of the Far with the Near East is found in the beautiful embroidery of Khotan, of which we picked up several good specimens. Here, too, scarcely anything that has been done within the last thirty or forty years is worth a second glance. The stitch chiefly used is the Turkish chain-stitch, which is not found in the embroidery of China Proper and is done with the *ilmek* or hooked needle of the Turki races. Some of the flowers, particularly the single sprigs, as well as the "feel" of the whole composition are Western. But the wave- and cloud-patterns, the butterflies and some of the flowers such as the purple iris, are definitely Chinese.

Apart from the silk needlework of Khotan, there is the gold and silver embroidery on velvet for which Kucha in the north has been famous for generations. The industry is still alive, though the materials are imported, the thread from India and the velvet from Russian Transcaspia. Women's indoor

286 531 caps are the chief article of manufacture. Really old specimens are exceedingly rare, and we were very fortunate in lighting upon six circular medallions, about ten inches in diameter, of green velvet embroidered in gold and silver with a Persian floral design. These, I was told on good authority, once adorned the State robes of the indigenous Princes of Kucha. Here again, though the design as a whole is Persian, there is a touch of China in certain parallel wavy lines, while the use of circular medallions in embroidery on robes is itself a Chinese device.

It was extraordinarily interesting to find, persisting in the south of the Tarim Basin right up to modern times, that same cultural mingling of Persia and China with the indigenous element which marked the sixth and seventh centuries of the Christian era, when the T'ang Emperors ruled the Middle Kingdom and the last of the Sassanids reigned in Zoroastrian Iran.[1] In nineteenth-century Khotan we have a rug of Turkish weave with a design in which the colours and patterns of China and Persia are closely intermixed. We find also an embroidery with a peculiarly Turkish stitch done on Chinese silk or Bokharan velvet and showing designs in which Chinese and Persian art are represented in almost equal proportions. There could be no more striking illustration of that peculiar feature of the Tarim Basin's history, the cultural mingling of East and West, to which I referred at the beginning of this chapter.

326 But carpet-weaving and embroidery were not the only arts in which bygone Khotan excelled. Among the most attractive products of its craftsmanship were brass and copper household utensils decorated with elaborate floral designs in pierced metal work. This is another lost art, for though teapots and water-jugs of graceful shape are still made, their only decoration is a rough chasing of lines following the curves of the pot. The old pierced metal work, four specimens of which we were fortunate enough to secure, is strongly reminiscent of the similar work in silver and copper still done at Isfahan. Here I could detect no Chinese influence, probably because the *chainak* (tea-pot) and *aftaba-lagan* (jug and basin

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[1] Cf. the discoveries made by Sir Aurel Stein in the seventh-century cemetery at Astana, near Turfan, of fine figured silks both in Chinese and in pure Sassanian style ("Geographical Journal," June, 1925, p. 492); also the Sassanian embroideries on damask found in the Cave of the Thousand Buddhas near Tunhwang ("Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. II, p. 208).

for hand-washing) are "turban-head" utensils in which the Chinese took no interest. 326

The calligraphic art seems never to have flourished in Chinese Turkistan, and no Turki or Persian manuscripts of any merit appear to have been produced locally. Among the masses of "junk" brought to me at Kashgar, however, I was fortunate enough to come upon a genuine fifteenth-century Persian MS., in almost perfect condition. Noticing that the writing was exquisite and that a very early date appeared on the last page, I pointed out disparagingly that the book contained no pictures (this was not surprising) and few illuminated headings, and offered five taels for it. Eventually, after months of desultory bargaining, I acquired it for sixteen. It proved on examination by Dr. Edwardes of the British Museum and Dr. Nicholson of Cambridge to be a MS. of considerable importance, dated A.H. 150 or A.D. 1446, and containing four different Persian works, namely: 212

(1) The *Kulliyat* of Farid-ud-din 'Attar (twelfth-thirteenth century).
(2) The *Fihi Mafihi* of the famous mystic poet Jalal-ud-din Rumi.
(3) A mystical work called *Tarab ul Majalis*.
(4) In the margin, the *Masnavi* of Jalal-ud-din Rumi.

The *Kulliyat* and the two Rumi works are early enough recensions to be of some importance textually, while the *Tarab ul Majalis* is almost unique, only one other copy of the work being known, that in the India Office Library.

As might be expected from the isolated position of the Tarim Basin and the mediæval conditions prevailing, the country is a happy hunting-ground for the folklorist. Quaint customs and superstitions, most of them dating far back beyond Islam and even Buddhism, survive in remarkable profusion. Legends, too, are numerous and widespread; but these are more difficult to disentangle from the mythological web with which Islam has interwoven the mass of Buddhistic and Manichæan tradition. The legends and mediæval history of Chinese Turkistan have been treated very fully by M. Grenard in his work "La Haute Asie," embodying the researches of the Dutreuil de Rhins Mission to Tibet and Chinese Turkistan (1890–95), and I found afterwards that some of the material I collected had already been recorded by that Mission. The subject is of such interest, however, and the work done on it so little known, that I make no apology for recording some of 538

538 my observations, including particularly those which do not appear in Grenard or other authorities, together with such of Grenard's data and conclusions as are necessary for their elucidation.

In Vol. III of " La Haute Asie " the author discusses the mass of tradition, pre-Muhammadan in origin but " captured " by Islam, of which the chief repositories are the *tazkiras* or sacred books of the various sanctuaries. At Imamlär, among the foot-hills of the Kunlun 45 miles south-west of Keriya, I bought from one of the mullas a modern copy of the *tazkira* of the shrine. With the help of Murad Qari I translated this quite short work, a matter of considerable difficulty owing to the badness of the writing and the obscurity in some places of the Turki. The legend proved to be that of the " Four Imams," Nasir-ud-din, Zahur-ud-din, Mu'in-ud-din and Qawam-ud-din, the last of the twelve descendants of 'Ali who according to local tradition came from Arabia at various times during the ninth and tenth centuries and were martyred in battle for the Faith. The narrative tells how the Four Imams sent one of their captains, Yusuf Qadir Khan Ghazi, with an army of 40,000 men to Kashgar, which showed signs of reverting to paganism. Yusuf Qadir Khan reported by letter that the people of Kashgar refused to believe in the Prophet unless His descendants (i.e. the Imams) came in person. The Four Imams accordingly set out for Kashgar with an army of 140,000 faithful.[1]

The psalm which the Imams sang at Madain in Arabia before they marched is worth repeating :

539 PSALM OF THE FOUR IMAMS WHO SET OUT FROM BAGHDAD TO CONQUER THE LAND OF KASHGAR

Ai igizlärni qelghuchi pasti
Bār-ni yoq, yoqni qelghuchi hasti ;
Zikrgha jāri qelsāne
Lashkarni qāri qelsāne ;
Salmā konglegha ghair yādini
Ber bu 'ājiz til-lārning murādini ;
Konglegha 'ilm o 'ishq tushqārghil
Ber 'amal rāst, yollgha bāshqārghil ;

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[1] The method by which they numbered the army is quaint, and is reminiscent of Herodotus' description of the numbering of the Persian host by Xerxes. They took a grain of maize for every ten men, and then weighed the maize, which was found to amount to one *charak* (about 20 lb.) ; the number of grains in one *ching* (1/16th of a *charak*) was then counted and the total arrived at.

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Būbākam hurmatidin, ai Bārā
Barja mushkil ishigha ber, Yārā ;
Hama mushkil-lāreni āsān ait
'Ishq o faiz o futuh ahsān ait.

(Translation)

O Thou who makest high places low,
Who makest Nothingness out of Existence and Existence out of
 Nothingness ;
Make (our mouths) worthy to utter Thy name,
Make our army worthy to read (Thy word).
Put not in our hearts the thought of anything other (than Thee).
Grant the desire of these our humble tongues.
Implant knowledge and love (of Thee) in our hearts.
Grant that we may act aright and guide us in our path ;
By the virtue of our Ancestor, O God,
Deliver the infidels to adversity, O Beloved (God) ;
Make all our difficulties easy ;
Grant us Thy love and favour, grant us victory.

538 In Bokhara and Ferghana the Imams were joined by further large armies of adherents under the command of local notables. When they arrived at Kashgar " the troops filled the city so full that if anything had fallen from Heaven it would have fallen upon the shoulders of the army, for there would have been no room for it upon the earth." The Kashgaris had therefore no choice but to embrace Islam. Leaving Yusuf Qadir Khan as governor of Kashgar, the Imams set out for Khotan. At Yarkand, which was then quite a small place, the inhabitants became converted at once ; as a reward the Imams informed them that one day Yarkand would be the capital of the country. At Goma a body of people were seen on the road ahead ; some came to the Imams and were converted, others ran away. The Imams were suspicious of these latter, wherefore the place was afterwards Goma, from *guman*, " suspicion." Pialma (two marches west of Khotan) received its name from the fact that the people brought presents of quinces and apples (*bih* and *alma*) to the Holy Ones.[1]

Meanwhile the princes of Khotan, named Juqta Rashid and Nuqta Rashid, were preparing to resist. The first encounter between the infidels and the Mussulman army was at Qumrabat Padshahim, where in a skirmish the Imam Shakir

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[1] Similar explanations are given for the names of Moji and Zanguya on the Yarkand-Khotan road, but I could not elucidate them. Such stories are obviously " etiological myths."

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was killed.[1] The luck of the Imams had turned. The princes of Khotan had a very powerful sorcerer, who caused the whole city to become invisible to the Mussulmans just as their attack commenced. The Imams, unable to take a city they could not see, stayed where they were for forty years. At the end of this period, as the invaders would not go, Nuqta Rashid and Juqta Rashid, together with most of their army and the sorcerer, escaped secretly from Khotan and fled to the mountains, leaving an aged champion called Khalkhal[2] in command at Khotan. The city now once more became visible to the Imams, who had no difficulty in entering it and converting Khalkhal after a sharp battle. They then went after Nuqta and Juqta, who had built themselves a city of stone on the top of a mountain.[3] They turned the infidels out of this stronghold by cutting the copper conduit by which water was brought to it from the river. The final battle, which took place further to the east, raged without result for two days. On the night of the second day two men of a village called Ujat, magically disguised as dogs, stole into the Mussulmans' camp and cut all the fastenings of their harness and other gear, so that next day the Imams and all their host were defeated and killed.[4] Only forty believers survived to bring the news of the martyrdom of the Imams to Yusuf Qadir Khan, who proceeded to the spot to bury them and establish the shrine which bears their name. As a punishment for their part in the martyrdom of the Imams, a curse fell upon the people of Ujat; it was decreed that their sons should always be born with four legs and a tail. The only way in which they could rid themselves of this curse was by giving their daughters to the Sheikhs of the Imamlär shrine in marriage and thus purifying the stock.[5]

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[1] Two pigeons flew from his body after the battle, thus enabling it to be identified; these pigeons are the ancestors of the thousands of sacred pigeons at the shrine of Imam Shakir at Qumrabat Padshahim. This story does not appear in the Imamlär *tazkira*.

[2] From a comparison with other *tazkiras*, Grenard thinks that Khalkhal was the king of Khotan and Juqta and Nuqta his ministers—possibly leading Lamas.

[3] Local tradition places this stronghold at Hasha, two marches south-east of Khotan at the foot of the Tikkelik Tagh. Here there are remains of a Buddhist monastery (Grenard). See also Stein, "Serindia," pp. 1320–1.

[4] The date of the martyrdom of the Imams is given as 10th Muharram, A.H. 391 (A.D. 1000).

[5] Grenard gives a résumé of this *tazkira* (Vol. III, pp. 38–41), but does not mention some of the interesting points such as the method

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

The author of "La Haute Asie," who collected all the 538 *tazkiras* of the various shrines (a fact of which I was unaware when I acquired and translated a copy of the Imamlär one), shows that in their present form they all date from about the beginning of the eighteenth century. They are Sunni editions of the original Shi'a legends of the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. Even the Shi'a legends, however, were not original. They were adaptations by the early mullas of pre-Muhammadan traditions connected with ancestor-worship at local shrines. None of the Twelve Imams came to Kashgar at all; the heroes of the legends were almost certainly eighth to tenth century Shi'a adventurers escaping from the persecution of the Ommiad Caliphs and other Sunni authorities. With small bands of followers, these bold Saracens raided Chinese territory in much the same way as their Western brethren raided Europe, and their exploits became legendary, like the eighth-century Saracen raid into the south of France which ended in the Battle of Poitiers. These "Imams" accomplished little, and they were all either killed or taken prisoner by the natives. None of their raids, Grenard thinks, preceded the authentic attempt of Qutaibah to impose Islam upon Kashgaria in the tenth century; it was Qutaibah who led the way, and yet he is not mentioned at all in the *tazkiras* and is entirely forgotten. This is because he was a Sunni.

The complete conversion of the Tarim Basin to Islam was 771 a slow process. In the tenth century the official religion of the country was Buddhism, with its chief stronghold at Khotan, but it was a debased Buddhism, and a pagan Manichæism was the real religion of the people. Paganism died hard in the Basin; indeed, as we shall see later, it is not by any means dead yet. The destruction of the old Buddhist theocracy at Khotan and the conversion of the whole country to Islam were begun by Qutaibah and the so-called Imams, and continued by Sadiq Boghra Khan, the Uigur Prince who first embraced Islam. Then came the Qara Khitai and the Mongols, and the Faith received a set-back. It was not till the fourteenth century that Islam could be definitely called the religion of the country. In the meantime the Muhammadan element had been evolving its tradition and consolidating its position *vis-à-vis* the pagans.

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of numbering the army of the Faithful; the Psalm; the derivations of Pialma, Goma, etc., and the punishment meted out to the men of Ujat (see next paragraph). Prof. Huntington, who visited Imamlär in 1905, mentions this same *tazkira* ("Pulse of Asia," p. 164).

77/ Its method was simply to appropriate the pagan heroes with their local cults and identify them with its own pioneers. The cult of the Imams and other Mussulman saints, as Grenard points out,[1] goes back to religions older than Islam. The Mussulman priests, powerless to destroy the popular worship at certain shrines, adopted those shrines and christened them with the names of Islamic personages.

538 I came across several such survivals of pre-Muhammadan traditions during our travels, though I did not always recognize their true significance. At Chira, half-way between Khotan and Keriya, is the shrine of one of the foremost "Imams," Ja'far Tairan. The local legend is that this Imam came flying through the air from Mecca to convert the Kingdom of Khotan. Now Hsuan Tsang in the seventh century tells of a sacred image at Keriya, 20 feet high and luminous, which at the death of the Buddha flew by itself from Kochambi in India, where it was made, to a place in the north of the Kingdom of Khotan.[2] A still more striking instance is that of the story in the Imamlär *tazkira* about the men of Ujat who entered the camp of the Imams by night disguised as dogs and rendered the arms and armour of the Mussulmans useless, thus helping the King of Khotan to defeat them. This is evidently an adaptation of the legend of the sacred rats recorded by Hsuan Tsang and quoted by Sir Aurel Stein.[3] Khotan was being invaded by a great force of Hiong-nu or Huns, and its king was in despair. One night he was visited in a dream by the King of the Rats, who offered him his help. The King of Khotan accepted the offer, and next night a great army of rats "as big as hedgehogs, their hair the colour of gold and silver," invaded the camp of the Huns and ate all their bow-strings and the leather fastenings of their harness. This altogether incapacitated the Huns, who were easily defeated next day. Thenceforward the rats which lived near the scene of the battle were regarded as sacred and fed regularly by pilgrims. The curious thing is that, according to Stein, the scene of this battle is the same as that of the defeat and death of Imam Shakir where now stands the "Pigeon Shrine" of Qumrabat Padshahim; and Stein thinks that the pigeons are the lineal descendants, as it were, of the golden-haired rats. It will be remembered that the Ujat men assumed

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[1] Vol. II, p. 240.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] "Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan," p. 195.

animal shape when they entered the Mussulman camp, and the curse which fell upon their village was that all male children in it should be born with four feet and a tail—an ingenious adaptation of the pagan tradition.

Another priestly legend of lineage older than Islam is that which was told me by the Chief Qazi of Opal, a charming village situated some 28 miles west of Kashgar on a plateau of loess between two winding valleys. These valleys, called the Qizil (red) and Qara (black) Jilghas, have been cut in the loess by two streams which flow one on each side of a low hill clothed with ancient planes and crowned by the picturesque shrine of Hazrat Maulam. They join about five miles below Opal, where there is the mausoleum of the Hazrat with another shrine over it. Near the foot of the hill is a cave, and the story is that this was once the lair of a dragon which preyed upon the countryside after the manner of its kind. This went on until the Four Imams came to free the country from the dragons of idolatry and of superstition. They commissioned one of their captains, Hazrat Maulam, to slay the beast, and gave him a magic belt which enabled him to do the deed. Unfortunately the dragon's poison was too strong for the Hazrat, and he died in the hour of victory. The question then was, where should he be buried? The people of the two valleys, the Red and the Black, fought for the honour of providing his burial-place. Finally it was decided to cut the Hazrat in half and inter his head and shoulders in one valley and his legs in the other. But when the Holy Imams heard of this they were angry, and ordered that the saint should be buried at the place where the two valleys meet.

At Lamus on the Duwa stream, twelve miles south of Pialma, I was interested to hear from a delightful old Haji a legend about the Four Imams which does not appear in the Imamlär *tazkira*. On the day before the battle at Qumrabat Padshahim in which, as already described, the Imam Shakir was killed, the Four Imams encamped at a place called Takhtuban in the desert, 20 miles north-east of Lamus. There was no water, and the Imams thirsted; so their followers, 40,000 of them, formed a line, standing side by side all the way to Lamus, whence they passed water in buckets from hand to hand until the thirst of the Holy Ones was quenched. Thenceforward the place was called Olam-su, afterwards corrupted to Lamus, because the water (*su*) was "grafted" (*olamak*) from its spring to Takhtuban.

778 I was puzzled in the Khotan region by the multitudes of poles with yaks' or horses' tails tied to the ends which were to be seen at every shrine stuck upright in the burial mound of the saint. Grenard explains that these *tughs*, as they are called, are no other than relics of human sacrifice. According to the Chinese chroniclers, the ancient Turks sacrificed human victims on the graves of the great and stuck their heads up on poles as a record of the fact. The Turks of the Altai, at the present day, according to Radloff, sacrifice horses in the same manner at the funeral of a chief, hanging up the skins over the grave with the head facing east. Among the Kazaks, the horse is not actually sacrificed, but its tail is cut off and it is regarded as dead; no further use is made of the animal. The practice of hanging horses' tails on poles at the Khotan shrines is obviously a further stage in the same process, all tradition of the original sacrifice having been lost.

Like the Italian peasant, the Turki is a great believer in the efficacy of local saints, and there are innumerable shrines all over the country dedicated not only to the "Imams" but to later saints and heroes. These sanctuaries almost always have some superstitious observance attached to them, connected either with the curing of diseases or with the bearing of children. At shrines where the belief is of the latter type the majority of the pilgrims are, of course, women, and the mullas have therefore been obliged in each case, for the sake of propriety, to invent a female saint, complete with legend, 769 in order to bring the cult into line with Islam. That most of these cults are nothing more or less than ancestor-worship of great antiquity is shown by the popular names of the shrines; the common people seldom refer to them by the name of any particular Mussulman saint, but pray to "Sultan Buwam" (Our Royal Ancestor or Ancestress), "Bu Anam" (Our Ancestress Mother), "Hazrat Pir" (The Holy Sage), and even "Qāra-Sakāl Atam" (My Father Blackbeard). The title "Padshah" or king is very often used *tout court*.[1]

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[1] Miss Sykes and Sir P. Sykes give accounts of several interesting shrines and the superstitions attaching thereto. See "Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia," pp. 68–72, 92–5, 205–7, 314, 320. The custom mentioned by Sir Percy on p. 314, of a woman desirous of a child putting her hand into one of the holes in the wall of the tomb, appertains to the shrine of Bu Anam on the left bank of the Tumen 4 miles above Kashgar. The rule, we were told, is that whatever her hand touches in the hole—lump of dirt, beetle, or whatever it may be—she must eat forthwith.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

The fact is that not only ancestor-worship but paganism is still strong in this land flowing with milk and honey, despite a thousand years of Islam, just as it survives all the thunderings of the priests in the backwoods of Persia. At Kerman the "Nauruz" or Zoroastrian New Year is still the most popular annual festival, and you may see the revellers picnicking in their thousands on a March afternoon under the "Ya 'Ali" cliff-shrine or on the sun-warmed rocks of the Kala-i-Ardashir. But the Sunni of the Tarim Basin is even more easy-going and joy-loving than the Shi'a of East Persia. He displays little fanaticism and none of the passionate self-immolation which marks a Persian Muharram, when the naked backs of the flagellants resound and frenzied swordsmen redden the streets with blood from their own scalps. He, too, celebrates the Zoroastrian *Nauraz*, at any rate at Yarkand, where the Jahan Bagh Fair in March is undoubtedly a survival of New Year celebrations. We were unfortunate to miss this fair both years we were in Chinese Turkistan, but I heard a certain amount about it. It is held on the big common to the north-east of the Old City, and goes on for three or four weeks. There are no religious observances and the people give themselves up to feasting and jollity; as might be expected, there is a good deal of immorality. For this reason the priests strongly disapprove of it, and do all they can to induce the Chinese authorities to forbid the holding of the fair. Against them are arrayed all the bakers, sweetmeat-sellers, acrobats, pimps, story-tellers and others who stand to reap a rich harvest; these organize monster petitions to the Amban in favour of the fair being held, and even, it is said, subscribe many hundred taels among themselves for the oiling of the necessary palms at the Yamen. The *pashraps* or police support the Jahan Bagh festival, for they, too, make heavy profits out of it, chiefly by blackmailing unmarried women. Many of the religious festivals, for that matter, are more pagan than Mussulman, especially those which are seasonal and therefore unconnected with the Muhammadan (lunar) calendar; they are merely popular gatherings for the purpose of feasting and enjoyment, and probably date back thousands of years. At the end of August, for example, greedy pilgrims from all over the province congregate at the fane of "Hazrat Sultanim," Sadiq Boghra Khan, to feast on the luscious figs of Astin Artush. The same applies to summer Saturdays at the beautiful shrine of Hidayatulla Khoja, known

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796 as "Hazrat Apak," most famous of the priest-kings, or "Khojas" from Samarqand, who misruled Kashgar from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards. Hazrat Apak is really a kind of country club for Kashgar; the *tawwuf* or "circling" of the shrines is supposed to be performed by every visitor, but the famous apricots and melons of Besh Karim are the attraction rather than the exhortations of the mullas. Even the Ashura (10th Muharram) festival at Ordam Padshah, in the desert east of Yangi Hissar, where is the shrine of Ali Arslan, is little more than a fair like Jahan Bagh with the immorality kept in bounds under the watchful eyes of the Church.[1]

771 It must be confessed, then, that the secular struggle waged by Islam against superstition, paganism and the cult of joy in the land of the Six Cities is an up-hill one. Perhaps the mullas are less zealous than the *mujtahidin* of Kerbela, less eloquent than the *mutakallimin* of Shiraz; for a nation has the priests it deserves. However this may be, their best friends could not call the Kashgaris good Mussulmans. Few perform more than one or two of the five daily prayers, and the Ramazan fast is often broken in private. Observance of the Qur'anic precepts is apt to vary directly with the number of persons present, a fact noted with dry humour by the Chinese in their saying "One Moslem, no Moslem; two Moslems, half a Moslem; three Moslems, one Moslem."

796 Of all their religious duties, the Ramazan fast bears most hardly upon the gluttonous Turki, and all the powers of Hell are invoked by their pastors to frighten them out of eating and drinking during the daylight hours. The following epigram was repeated to me *à propos* of the Dulanis of the Yarkand River valley, but its application is much wider:

Roza tutdum jān uchun;	I fast in Ramazan to save my soul;
Kecha qopdum gāl uchun;	I wake at night to keep my belly full;
Tu ma'e desām qurqaman,	I fear to say "I am not going to fast,"
Gorda tukhmāq bār uchun.	For there's a rod that waits in Hell for me.

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[1] Ali Arslan, the "Lion of Kashgar," was an Uigur prince, nephew of Sadiq Boghra Khan, who went down fighting the armies of Khotan. Why, in a Sunni country and in commemoration of a Sunni saint, the exclusively Shi'a festival of the Ashura should be celebrated, nobody was able to tell me.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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A PROFESSIONAL BEGGAR, OLD AQSU

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DULANI CHILDREN, MARALBASHI DISTRICT
A GAME OF CAT'S CRADLE

[Face p. 184]

796 During Ramazan it is incumbent on the good Mussulman to give to the poor the food he denies himself, and children go round singing quaint begging songs, which must be very old. Miss Sykes gives a translation of one she heard ;[1] here is another :

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Song of the Child-Beggars at Ramazan

Ramazan allah bu shahrim Ramazan!	God's Ramazan be to this town, God's Ramazan !
Ramazan aitip keldoh Danduklär-din.	From Danduklār I have come crying Ramazan.
Bizgha birnima qoilär miki qoimaqlärdin[2]	Surely a bit of sacrificial bread has been put out for me ?
Aq tukhe, appaqtukhe qamghaqda dur.	There's a white fowl, a nice white fowl on your perch.
Bizgha qoighan kakcha[3] *nān sanduqda dur.*	There's a round of bread stored in your cupboard for me.
Oining ārkasi taining izi, taining izi ;	Behind your house there are the hoof-marks of a foal, of a foal ;
Bizgha mu nan biredur, Baining qizi ?[4]	Won't you give me a little bread, O daughter of a rich man ?
Ramazan-ning untörtida buz ala qoi	Let *me* have the brown piebald sheep on 14th Ramazan ;
Kale păchakini Mullagha qo'e ![5]	Its head and feet you may keep for the Mulla.

It is not only at the nocturnal " Mi-Carême " of 14th Ramazan that a sheep is sacrificed. I well remember how under the old régime the streets of Constantinople used to swarm at " Qurban Bairam " with *hamāls* staggering under great fat sheep destined for the sacrifice ; and this festival is similarly celebrated at Turki Kashgar, though the slaughter is much less than in rich Stamboul. Sheep are only sacrificed at the houses of the well-to-do ; those who cannot afford one of their own go round in batches to the houses of their wealthier friends for the " salaam " ceremony. Standing

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[1] " Through Deserts and Oases," p. 174.

[2] *Qoimaq* is a kind of bread baked in oil, only used for sacrificial offerings.

[3] *Kakcha* is a sort of large round biscuit-bread always put before guests. It is seldom eaten and the same *kakchas* turn up at party after party. Some glutinous substance is mixed with the flour of the *Kakcha* to make it durable.

[4] The possession of a yearling or two-year-old horse (*tai*) is a sign of wealth in Turkistan.

[5] i.e. " Don't try to palm off the customary mosque offerings on *me*—I want something better."

796 before the owner of the house they bow with a sweeping movement of the arms and a stroking of the beard intoning a sonorous "*Amīn*" the while, after which each person is entitled to a sup of sacrificial mutton. On the first of the two days of Qurban only men perform the salaam; the second is the women's day, when separate tables are spread in the *andarūn* for the fair visitors. The skin of each sheep sacrificed goes to the Imam, the head and feet to the Mu'azzin, the neck and offal to the butcher and a portion of the meat to the beggars.

755 Turning to superstitions, the field for research is so wide that it was scarcely possible for me to do more than reconnoitre it in the time at my disposal. Witchcraft in particular flourishes exceedingly. I had it on good authority that at Yarkand in 1924 there were between 25 and 30 witch-doctors, who made large profits, chiefly out of the women. These gentry are called *bakhshis* at Yarkand, *du'a-khwans* or *jadugars* at Kashgar. At a meeting of the "real" doctors of Yarkand in 1923—the local General Medical Council, as it were—it was estimated that the *bakhshis* made between them 175,000 local taels or about £2,300 in the year, as against a beggarly £400 made by the poor doctors. The latter have only themselves to thank for this state of affairs, for they are hopelessly inefficient and their methods date back to the days of Hippocrates and Galen.[1] Skilful advertisement, however, contributes to the magicians' popularity; in every tea-house, every meeting-place of the people there are agents paid by them to tell stories of wonderful cures effected by such and such a *bakhshi*. The fees paid to the witch-doctors vary from one *tenga* (2*d*.) to 20 taels (£2 13*s*. 4*d*.) or more. In return for these they compose spells and perform incantations to drive away the demons which possess the patient. I heard them doing it once, and I shall never forget it. One night, as I was sleeping in my verandah as usual, I was awakened at 3 a.m. by loud music and drum-beating from a neighbouring house. The playing was loud and rhythmic and the melody haunting; but there was something sinister about the music, as if it had no soul. One phrase would be repeated again and again, then another would be substituted for it. I was puzzled by the performance; it sounded like some strange Bacchanal,

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[1] For a description of the methods of Kashgar doctors, see Grenard, "La Haute Asie," Vol. II, pp. 110–12; Sykes, "Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia," pp. 317–20.

but what house would be making merry in the small hours that had been silent at midnight? After a time, sleep being impossible, I went round to the quarter-guard and sent the orderly on duty to try and stop it. While he was yet on his way the music ceased suddenly of its own accord, in the middle of a phrase, and all was silence. At breakfast the orderly came and reported that the *du'a-khwans* had been making magic music to drive away the evil spirits from our neighbour, an old Haji, who was very sick. He had died that morning, I was told, at a quarter to four.[1] 755

Witch-doctoring is by no means the only form of magic practised. There is *jarrakashi* or the casting of the evil eye; there are the spells which induce love, and those which sow enmity between people—these are bought by third parties, who expect to profit thereby; there are the *chumkashchis* or private detectives with magical powers. The belief in the evil eye is very strong, especially among the fair sex. If a woman feels liverish, she at once concludes that she has been bewitched, and goes to the *du'a-khwan*. Even D.'s excellent maid, Aisha Khan, who had been much with Europeans and was distinctly intelligent, was by no means free from this weakness. Once when she had been feeling seedy for some days she came to D. and informed her rather sheepishly—ashamed to admit belief, but evidently believing—that her friends all said it was her husband's other wife who was casting the evil eye upon her. The trouble, she explained, was that the other lady's brother was a professional *du'a-khwan*, which 754

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[1] Grenard, "La Haute Asie," pp. 254–7, describes the procedure on such occasions. The patient is taken out of bed and seated on the ground with his back up against a rope stretched tightly from the middle of the ceiling to the floor. While his assistants play on their tambourines and sing continuously, the sorcerer dances round the patient and brushes the latter's face with the body of a cock. Sometimes he takes out the cock's lungs and whips the sufferer on the back with them, or with a willow wand, crying the while "Qach! Qach!" (Avaunt!) Invocations begin with the Prophet, but go on with Chingiz Khan and other ancient heroes. A fire is lighted, and a tambourine is placed in the smoke and then brought close to the patient's ear. All this, says Grenard, appertains to ancestor-worship and Shamanism. The wand, the tambourine, the lungs of sacrificed animals, are all part of the stock-in-trade of the "shamans" or sorcerers of pagan tribes in Siberia. Most curious of all, the rope tied from ceiling to floor represents the tree-trunk, marked with the signs of the Zodiac and other mystical characters, which is placed upright in the middle of the tent after the completion of a "purification."

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

754 gave her an unfair advantage. There are several death-spells in use. If a woman wishes her husband to die, she washes her head on seven successive Wednesday mornings; another method is to wear two caps, one on top of the other, for seven weeks. Similarly, a man puts a death-spell on his wife by combing his beard with two combs. In most countries where witchcraft and the evil eye are believed in, portions of the body such as hairs, nail-parings, etc., are peculiarly valuable to the enemy who wishes to cast a spell upon their late owner; in Chinese Turkistan, by a curious extension of the idea, this property attaches also to a person's shoes, or rather to the *kafsh-massi* or slippers which are worn out of doors over the long boots and taken off on entering a house. If you find your enemy's shoes lying neatly together outside the room in which he sits, you turn them upside down or place them one on top of the other; if you want to kill him, you take them up and throw them down haphazard. At Yarkand the shoe superstitions differ somewhat from those current at Kashgar; the effects of meddling with one's *kafsh-massi* seem to be less serious. I was told there that when a caller outstays his welcome, he is apt to find on his departure that his shoes are lying upside down; this is a gentle hint not to stay so long next time. Omens also attach to shoes at Yarkand; if one is found lying on top of the other—whether by accident or otherwise—it means that the owner, if a man, is going to get a new wife, if a woman, a new husband.

A curious idea widely prevalent is that the death of a person affects the health of his or her surviving relatives. A boy was once brought to D. with the statement that he "had been ailing ever since his father died two years ago." This might have been a ruse to obtain alms, for orphanhood is a valuable asset in Muhammadan countries and is apt to be exploited by the orphan's relations; but we found instances of widows in a similar manner suffering in health from the death of their husbands.

775 Ghosts are firmly believed in and much feared, the worst kind being those of dead Chinese. Referring to the city of Qarashahr, a month's journey from Kashgar along the Urumchi road, a woman who had been there said it was "an awful place for Chinese ghosts." The only thing to do if you are haunted by them is to propitiate them by leaving money on your doorstep overnight. In the morning if the money is gone, you know that the Chinese ghosts have taken it.

The snakes found in the Kashgar oasis are not poisonous, but the people have a certain superstitious dread of them for which it is difficult to account. It is said that if you kill a snake, its mate will follow you about everywhere—haunt you, in fact, like an Indian "sending." As in most Oriental countries, rumours of human sacrifice obtain currency whenever any great building work is commenced. When Major Dockray erected the masts of his wireless station, five miles north of Kashgar, the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages spread it abroad that he had kidnapped forty Turki children and had buried them underneath the masts. He supposed that it was the "Hidden Hand" trying to wreck the scheme, but it was not; it was a very ancient and deeply-rooted superstition. At Kashgar it is believed that the great mud wall of the city contains the bodies of the slaves who died under the overseers' whips while engaged in building it; as they fell, it is said, their bodies were built into the wall. This is obviously a variant of the human sacrifice legend, and probably represents a race-memory of horrors that used to take place in forgotten ages.[1] 774 [825]

Since the earliest times the Takla Makan Desert has been the subject of much superstition and legendary lore. The people who live on its verge all believe that great and wealthy cities lie buried beneath its sands, and that it is haunted by demons and the ghosts of the cities' former inhabitants. These are much feared by the "Taklamakanchis" or treasure-seekers who year after year risk and sometimes lose their lives in desert expeditions in search of buried treasure. A remarkable example of the antiquity of the Takla Makan legends is given by Sir A. Stein in *Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan.*"[2] While on his way to the Uzun-Tati site north of Domoko on the Khotan-Keriya road, he heard from some villagers a legend of the Sodom and Gomorrah type about the city which had once existed at Uzun Tati. Its inhabitants, they said, mocked at a holy man who had rebuked them for their sins, whereupon as a punishment God had rained sand upon the 773

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[1] When the Grandpass Victoria Bridge was commenced at Colombo, it was firmly believed that two children had been sacrificed to the god of the Kelani River. As recently as the summer of 1924 serious riots, in which six Sikh taxi-drivers were killed, took place at Calcutta as the result of a rumour that certain Sikh workmen engaged in the construction of a dock were kidnapping and sacrificing Muhammadan children.

[2] Pp. 430, 438–9.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

773 place for seven days and nights until all was buried. Now the great Buddhist pilgrim Hsuan-tsang who passed this way in the seventh century of our era stayed at a town called Pi-mo, which Stein has conclusively identified with the Uzun-Tati site; and at this place Hsuan-tsang heard an almost exactly parallel Sodom and Gomorrah legend about another buried city called Ho-lo-lo-kia, still further out in the Takla Makan! A similar story is attached to the shrine of Imam Jamal-ud-Din at Keriya; this saint is supposed to have caused the sudden overwhelming of the city of Ketek because of insults he had received from its inhabitants. While at Goma in 1922 I had occasion to interrogate some Taklamakanchis from Qaratagh Aghzi, the "terminal oasis" of the Kilian River, about a new desert site which they said they had found a couple of years previously. At first they were uncommunicative, but afterwards when their tongues were loosened they told me about their discoveries, and many other things as well. One of them described an experience he had had in the neighbourhood. "I was lost one evening in the Takla Makan," he said, "and had no water. Suddenly I saw before me great walls in the sand and a gateway in the midst of them. I passed through the gateway and found myself in the outer court of a huge *yamen*.[1] I went through more doors and courtyards and at last I entered a great hall (*aivān*) which was full of treasure, gold and coral and pearls. But there was a huge tiger on guard there; flames issued from his mouth and I knew he was an evil spirit. I fainted from fear, and when I came to my senses I was among the sands and there was no *yamen*. Next day I came upon the tracks of wood-cutters and found my way home."

172 Sir A. Stein's researches have proved that none of the buried cities of the Takla Makan which have so far been found were overwhelmed by any sudden catastrophe. All were abandoned bit by bit, owing either to a generally-diminishing water-supply, or to the shifting of particular rivers, or to political causes. The Sodom and Gomorrah legends are probably, therefore, quite baseless. But this does not necessarily imply that the ancient tradition about the "Forty Cities of the Takla Makan"—great and populous centres, now buried under the sands far out beyond the furthest explorations of the archæologists—has no foundation in fact. The dawn of history in the Tarim Basin is relatively late, the second

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[1] Any palace or large Chinese house is called a "yamen."

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

century before Christ; thousands of years before that dawn 172
the Egyptian, Minoan, Sumerian and other great civilizations existed. Is it impossible that the Tarim Basin, in the heart of that Innermost Asia which is believed by many to be the cradle of the human race, may once have harboured a race as powerful and a culture as advanced as any that flourished on the banks of the Nile, the Euphrates or the Indus?

All depends on the answer to the question: Was the 132
water-supply ever much greater than it is now? In this
connection the conclusions of Sir A. Stein in his latest publi- 172
cation[1] are of the utmost interest. Discussing whether the abandonment of Niya, Dandan Oilik and other sites may be assigned to a supposed climatic desiccation of Central Asia, or to some other cause or causes, he points out that definite archæological evidence forces us to two conclusions.

> "One is that climatic conditions quite as arid as the present ones prevailed within the big trough of the Tarim Basin as far back as ancient remains and available records can take us. The other conclusion is that the amount of water carried by its rivers has greatly diminished during the same historical period."

How can these apparently contradictory propositions be reconciled? As a possible solution of this problem Sir Aurel propounds a remarkable theory which was verbally suggested to him in 1908 by Colonel Sir Sidney Burrard, late Surveyor-General of India, and recently also proposed by Dr. von Ficker with regard to similar conditions in the Oxus basin.

> "This theory" (he says) "seeks the reason for the diminished volume of the rivers in the shrinkage of the glaciers on the high ranges which are their main feeders. It accounts for the shrinkage itself by assuming that those glaciers comprise great reserves of ice which have been left behind by the last glacial period and have since been undergoing slow but continuous reduction through milder climatic conditions. This continued process would suffice to explain shrinkage in the irrigation resources during historical time without the climate of the basin as a whole having in the course of this period, very short in a geological sense as it seems, undergone any appreciable change."

In other words, the glaciers of the Kunlun may be no other than the dwindling remnants of the frozen cap that Asia wore in the last Ice Age. A link with the past indeed!

Sixteen centuries ago even a small stream like the Niya River flowed far out into the desert, watering a flourishing town 20 miles beyond its present disappearing-point at the

[1] "Geographical Journal," June, 1925, pp. 487–90.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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shrine of Imam Ja'far Sadiq.[1] Four or five thousand years ago, presumably, this river and others like it flowed in greater volume still, penetrating far beyond ancient Chingchueh and Dandan Oilik. Those were the days, perhaps, when the great Lop Sea to the east had not altogether dried up, and the "innumerable laughter" of its waves hid what are now the sharp-edged salt clods of the world's worst desert. It may be, then, that in the days when Sargon reigned in Babylon and Manes on the Nile, wide fertile lands and populous cities with a culture and an art of their own basked in the Central Asian sun, and that the glory and the wealth of a forgotten civilization lie hid for ever under the gigantic dunes of the Takla Makan.

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[1] "Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan," p. 351.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

[Face p. 192]

A DESERT LAKE: THE CHÖLL KUL, MARALBASHI DISTRICT, WITH SAND-HILLS OF TAKLA MAKAN

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3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER XIII

CUSTOMS, MUSIC, POETRY AND FOLKLORE

> "Il est peu de pays où la famille soit plus faiblement constituée que dans le Turkestan oriental et il y a bien longtemps que le mariage s'y conclut et s'y dissout avec une égale facilité. Il n'est peut-être pas une région en Asie où les mœurs soient plus relâchées et où, en même temps, les femmes aient plus d'indépendance et d'influence, où l'on rencontre à la fois moins de dignité et plus de douceur dans la vie privée."
>
> GRENARD.

123 THE conditions of family life in the Tarim Basin and the manners and customs connected with the home are no less peculiar to this remote and isolated land than are its legends and superstitions. Thanks to the extra-territorial jurisdiction exercised by the British Consul-General, I had a considerable number of civil as well as criminal cases to settle according to the law and custom of the country, which were applicable not only when Chinese subjects were parties, but also in civil suits of all kinds brought by or against British Indian nationals permanently domiciled in Chinese Turkistan. In the course of many attempts to do some sort of justice in long and complicated cases concerning succession and bequest, marriage and divorce, chancery, settlement of accounts, and so on, I picked up a certain amount of information about the conditions and customs of family life, especially at Yarkand, whence most of the work came. I am also indebted to my friend, Murad Qari of Yarkand, whom I have already mentioned more than once, for much useful and interesting information relative to his native town.

165 Owing to ignorance and bad hygiene, infant mortality is undoubtedly very high, though it probably does not approach the appalling figures for Calcutta and some other parts of

INDIA.

000 India. Infants are fed by their mothers for a couple of months,
853 after which all kinds of food, however indigestible, are administered,
in order to " strengthen the stomach " and make the
child " as tough as a mill-stone " (*tigarman-mizāj*). In this
the Turkis merely copy their masters, for, according to D.,
a Chinese mother will stuff her baby at a party with anything
she eats herself, and I myself have seen an official administer
842 neat brandy to his three-months-old infant. Among the
middle and lower classes daughters are more desired than
sons, because there is always the chance of a girl bringing a
wealthy husband into the family, whereas a boy does nothing
for his parents after the age of fifteen or sixteen, when he
852 marries and sets up house for himself. Seven days after
birth the christening ceremony is held; the Imam and Mu'azzin
of the mosque are invited, together with the *Uttuz-oghle* (lit.
" thirty sons "), an assembly of neighbours which corresponds
roughly to the Indian *panchayat*; the priests give the child its
name and recite certain verses of the Qur'an in return for small
871 fees. Schooling at the *maktab* or mosque-school begins at
four or five and continues until about seven if the parents are
poor, nine if they belong to the middle class, and twelve or
thirteen if they are rich. Besides the *maktabs* there are
madrasas or colleges, which are very sparsely attended, only
about 5 per cent. of the boys being sent to them at the age of
fourteen or fifteen. Until fifteen or twenty years ago writing
was scarcely taught at all; messages were entrusted verbally
to a professional *hafiz* or " rememberer," who acted as postman
and could be relied upon not to forget or mix up his
" letters," however many he carried at a time from one town
to another. Even now scarcely one *maktab* in ten teaches
writing. Ordinary children merely learnt by heart certain
chapters of the Qur'an, together with the rules of prayer and
fasting. The older boys are taught at certain schools a little
Persian literature (this is confined to the " Gulistan," the
" Bostan " and the " Bedil ") and read a few Turki books,
such as " Sufi Allahyar " and " Nawai." The fees are not
excessive. For the first six months of schooling an entrance
fee of two tengas (4*d*.) is paid, after which a fee of one
dachin ($\frac{1}{12}$th of 1*d*.), called the " Panjshambalik," is paid
to the *akhun* or schoolmaster every Thursday (*Panjshamba*).
Then when the Qur'an is begun a further six tengas initial
payment is made and the Panjshambalik rises to three
dachins. At each of the two *'Ids*, i.e. at the end of the

Ramazan fast, and at Qurban, the schoolmaster receives two 871
tengas. During the winter months each child brings one stick of firewood, as well as one *dachin* as its contribution to the expense of papering the windows of the schoolroom; most of these "perks" are retained by the schoolmaster. The "teaching" consists merely in making the children sing the lesson over and over again at the top of their voices, all together, until it is known by heart; the more noise a school makes, the higher the reputation of the schoolmaster.

The conditions of the "marriage market" and many of 584
the matrimonial customs of the Eastern Turkis differ widely from those obtaining among the Kirghiz of the mountains, described in Chapter XI above. Instead of being at a premium, women are at a discount and no bride-price is paid. For a man, marriage is easy and cheap, and divorce even
easier and cheaper. Among the agricultural classes, which 595
form the large majority of the population, a man has seldom more than one wife at a time; but in the cities many men have at least two, always, be it noted, living in different towns or in different quarters of the same town. The harem system is unknown and would be impossible in Kashgar,
owing to the quarrelsomeness of the women. The marriage [582]
age for girls is 12–14, for boys 15–16. The matches are
always arranged between the respective parents, the wishes 584
of the young people not being consulted. D. noticed at Kashgar that there was a great deal of rivalry among mothers about getting their daughters married off at the earliest possible age; even among the children themselves, a girl who reaches the age of fourteen without a husband is unmercifully chaffed by her companions. On the other hand, the Indian custom of not allowing a boy to see his fiancée until the wedding-day does not exist in Chinese Turkistan; the children have often known and played with each other for years.

A certain amount of ceremony and importance attaches to 585
a girl's first *toi* or marriage. Her parents give a party to all the neighbours; the *imam* and *mu'azzin* are again present, and the bride and bridegroom eat together bread dipped in salt and water. Food and money are also given to the beggars and fees to the mullas; the bride receives a trousseau of clothes, jewellery and household utensils (*toiluk*), the bridegroom a coat and a pair of boots. The total expenses of a

585 wedding, incurred almost entirely by the bride's people (the bridegroom's contribution is nominal), amount to anything from 30–50 taels (£4–£6 13*s.* 4*d.*), in the case of poor people to 2,000 taels (£233) or more, in that of the very rich. The only liability (and that merely a nominal one) incurred by the bridegroom is the *haqq-i-mihr* or settlement on his wife.[1] This varies between fifty and a thousand taels and is usually fixed verbally before the *uttuz-oghle*. It is regarded as a debt which may theoretically be claimed by the wife at any time up to her death; but it never is claimed except at divorce. In many cases the *mihr* is waived; in more than one "divorce case" which came before me the husband claimed that his wife had let him off the *mihr* at the wedding, whereupon she challenged him to produce members of the *uttuz-oghle* to prove it.[2]

From the house of the bride's parents to that of the bridegroom a small party, accompanied by musicians, marches in procession through the streets, with the lady in front either riding a pony or donkey or walking, as the case may be. Arrived at her new home, the bride is not supposed to touch the threshold with her feet; she is lifted over it by her husband and his relations. However thankful she may be to get her daughter "off," the mother of the bride is obliged by custom to weep and wail loudly during the marriage ceremonies; the girl, too, laments (probably with more sincerity) at leaving the home of her childhood. I took down the words of their traditional laments, which are rather pretty:[3]

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[1] The *haqq-i-mihr* must not be confused with the maintenance payable for a hundred days by a husband to a wife whom he divorces against her will. Grenard (Vol. II, p. 119) says that the "*mehr*" found in other Mussulman countries is an *institution presque hors d'usage dans le Turkestan chinois;* this is correct so far as it goes, but it should be added that its existence is universally recognized, if only as a legal fiction.

[69] [2] Such disputes, like most civil and many criminal cases, are settled by the parties being sent to the Qazi or Mussulman judge, who hears the evidence and either passes judgment at once or orders one party or the other to take the oath; as a rule, the party on whom the oath comes refuses to take it and loses the case, for it is regarded as a disgrace to swear on the Qur'an. *Qasam-khor* ("oath-eater") is a term of abuse, meaning a greedy or litigious person who sticks at nothing to win his case.

[3] Grenard (Vol. II, p. 250) has the mother's lament, not the daughter's, for which I am indebted to Murad Qari.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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MOTHER'S SONG

Kichik kina, qāra kuz	Little tiny dark-eyed one
Wai balam !	Alas, my child !
Tili tātliq, shirin suz	Sweet of tongue, O silvery voice
Wai balam !	Alas, my child !
Balam mandin airilde	My child is taken from me
Wai balam !	Alas, my child !
Uida yālghuz qālārman,	In the house I am left alone,
Wai balam, balam !	Alas, my child ! my child !

DAUGHTER'S SONG

Man ānāmdin airilip	Torn from my mother's side
Sunde qanātim qāralip ;	My wings are broken and bent ;
Man yiglamae, kim yiglasun	Who may weep, if not I
Jānim ānamdin airilip ?	Torn from my darling mother's side ?

Some days after the actual wedding two parties are given 585 by the bride's family, if well-off, one for the men and the other for the ladies. The following is an account by D. of a wedding party she attended in the women's apartments of a wealthy household at Kashgar. It was by no means the first social function at which she assisted, for she frequently entertained and was entertained by the Kashgari wives of friends or dependants of the Consulate-General. Thanks to the colloquial knowledge of the language which she acquired, she thus became familiar with the feminine side of Turki social life, a subject on which I have found no first-hand information in any of the books I have read about Chinese Turkistan.

"I rode to Y—— K——'s town house on Camel Sulaiman, followed in a Chinese cart by Aisha Khan resplendent in a new dress, a purple velvet jacket embroidered with silver and a black and gold cap. When we arrived a servant conducted us through a narrow passage to the door of the inner court-yard of the house, where the bridegroom's mother and some of her friends and relations came out to receive us. The party had started at about half-past nine in the morning, and as it was now eleven most of the guests had already arrived and the women musicians were seated in a corner waiting to strike up. The room was large and whitewashed, and the guests in their gorgeous dresses sitting all round against the walls on quilts and gaily-coloured rugs made a wonderful blaze of colour.

"Some sat cross-legged but most in the usual Turki position, i.e. [576] sitting on their heels with their knees on the ground. Most of the women were wearing their wedding clothes and ornaments, consisting [292] of velvet gold-embroidered caps of different colours, satin coats trimmed with Indian cloth of gold, bright-hued silk skirts and highly polished black boots like riding-boots. In front of their caps they wore a big [301]

585 spray of beaten-gold flowers quivering on gold wire stalks, bunches
[301] of similar ornaments above each ear and huge gold filigree earrings.
Their hair was in plaits, with a long black silk tassel attached to each
[302] plait. The dresses were of red, blue, emerald, plum, purple, pink
[293] and many other bright tints, and the sunlight streaming through the
one window lit up a most wonderful picture.

"Two chairs had been placed side by side at one end of the room,
585 one for me and one for the bride when she should come. One of
the guests who came soon after me was another little bride, some
574 relation of the family but not the girl for whose wedding the party
was given. I was told that it was only her second appearance in
public since her wedding, and it was perhaps for this reason that her
[576] reception was particularly pretty. All the ladies stood up, and as she was led from one to the other each gave her a kiss and shook hands Turki fashion, i.e. taking her clasped hands in theirs and then touching their own lips with a graceful gesture. She was only fifteen, I think, and terribly shy to begin with. She was led up to me and placed in the chair next mine for a few minutes, but she soon slid on to the floor and sat beside her younger sister, a talkative child of eleven who had been told off to fan me. A few belated guests were ushered in, and having shaken hands all round, were assisted to take off their outdoor caps and veils and immediately presented by our hostess with brand-new indoor caps, which unlike the outdoor ones have no fur or lining. Some of the women had brought their own and politely refused the offer of a new one; but it must add considerably to the expense of giving a party when you have to provide indoor caps to guests who have forgotten theirs! Tea was served, soon after I arrived in small china cups with sugar and no milk. Our hostess and her relations had none themselves, but spent their time handing round cups, filling them up with tea and spooning in sugar. There was one lady whom I could not take my eyes off, she was such a wonderful figure in her crimson satin dress with eight long plaits of hair hanging down from under her richly-embroidered cap, and fastened on to four of these long black silk tassels which swept the ground as she moved about. After the cups had been cleared away the musicians struck up and some of the ladies rose and danced in the usual way, one at a time; but soon the long narrow *dastarkhwans* or cloths spread on the ground for eating were put out once more and huge trays of peaches and nectarines were brought in. These disappeared in a marvellously short time and were followed by some more music and dancing, and at about half-past twelve the wedding feast began in earnest. The first course was a very popular one called the Wedding Dish, a sort of soufflé made of stiffly-beaten white of egg and powdered sugar, which is always eaten at weddings. It was served in small bowls with pieces of bread. The arrival of this dish was a signal for a temporary relaxation of the intense decorum which had hitherto characterized the proceedings. The children who had come with their mammas, and who had up to now been playing in the court-yard, crowded into the room or leant in through the wide windows, clamouring for some of the Wedding Dish. The heat became terrific. The hostess had disappeared, presumably to superintend the preparation of the special dishes which were to be served later on. The lady of the eight pigtails and other friends of the family, having

changed their beautiful but hot satin dresses for simpler affairs of 585
thin silk and muslin, hurried about refilling the bowls, breaking up
the bread into suitable-sized pieces and looking after everybody, while 574
two maids did their best to keep us all cool by flapping a large tablecloth in the middle of the room. When the last of the Wedding Dish had been finished, the *dastarkhwans* were taken out to be shaken and we all had our hands washed Mussulman fashion; copper jugs and basins were brought in, and as each of us in turn held out our sticky hands the ladies of the house poured water over them into the basins. Huge piles of round flat loaves of bread about eighteen inches across then appeared and were placed at intervals opposite the guests. Next came large flat dishes of a savoury stew of mutton and vegetables, which was rapidly spooned up by the ladies with corners of bread. Titbits and succulent little bones with meat on them were handed through the window by fond mammas to their clamouring children. When this course was finished there were still a good many of the flat loaves remaining and these were distributed among the guests. One was rather tentatively offered to me; I accepted it joyfully, which was considered a great joke. Fruit, sweets and tea followed, and when everything had been cleared away and another hand-washing had taken place, the musicians struck up again.

"The women danced and I found myself in conversation with a plump elderly dame, the mother of a leading ice-merchant, who was giving Aisha Khan and myself a graphic description of the illness and last moments of her first husband; I did not notice therefore that most of the older ladies had left the room, and it was only when Aisha Khan whispered 'They've gone to fetch the bride,' that I awoke to the fact that satin dresses and velvet jackets had been resumed and every one was looking expectantly towards the door. A few minutes later, surrounded by elderly relatives and friends, the bride appeared. I gasped, for there in the afternoon sunlight which streamed through the windows stood a tall slim figure clad in glittering gold from head to foot. A long coat of gold brocade hid her satin dress, a veil of golden gauze fell round her face and down her back, great sprays of gold flower ornaments quivered in her cap and long earrings of gold and pearls and a heavy chain and pendant of the same metal completed her adornment. She might have been a bride for Tamerlane or some such great Emperor of the olden days! A thin white silk veil was thrown over her face and head, and she was led up to the chair beside mine with great ceremony and made to sit down. Poor thing, she was so nervous that her breath came in gasps and her hands when I touched them were icy cold. All the guests drew back, then a little girl of about four was pushed forward and running up to the bride snatched away the white veil. This was the signal for a regular outburst, all the guests screaming and laughing and chattering at the same time, and then falling on the bride and kissing her. When this, evidently the most important part of the ceremony, was over I thought it was about time to go, as it was nearly four o'clock.

"What strikes me most about these women is their manners, which 585
are as pretty as their clothes. When the hostess gives tea or anything
else to one of her guests, the latter rises and bows saying '*Ashkalla*' 576
(thank you). On arrival and departure they make delicious little polite speeches to each other—much more picturesque than our mean-

585 ingless 'How do you do?' They have nice smiling cheery faces and a way of appearing pleased to see one, which is most disarming. 576 Some of them are startlingly beautiful in the regular Aryan style, with pencilled eyebrows, straight noses and oval faces; others have broad, rather flat faces like the Kirghiz, but laughter comes so easily to them that even the plain faces become attractive."

586 In nine cases out of ten, according to Murad Qari, these child-marriages *de convenance* are failures and soon dissolved. For the husband, there is no difficulty about a divorce; all he has to do is to go to the Qazi—the woman's presence is not necessary—and put his seal on an affidavit (*jai*) to the effect that he divorces his wife; this affidavit costs him two tengas (*4d.*) and the thing is done. Lawful conditions and terms, if any, are included in the *jai*, which also states whether the divorce is to be *ba'in* (permanent) or *raja'i* (non-binding).[1]

A wife cannot divorce her husband without his consent; all she can do is to leave him and wait till he divorces her, when she can marry some one else after 100 days. As he can marry again at once and as often as he likes up to a total number of four wives at a time, he is in a strong position and can exact his own terms. These generally include the waiving of the *mihr*, and as low a figure as possible for the maintenance of the woman and any children there may be. In most cases it is the woman who is the suppliant, and the man who "gives her a paper," i.e. *jai* or affidavit of divorce. Sometimes she pays quite a large sum for it; but this is illegal and must not be mentioned in the *jai*. In other cases she induces the man to let her go by giving up the furniture and utensils she brought with her to his house.

Let me give one or two illustrations of the working of this 586 curious system. Our coachman, Abdulla, was a much-595 married man. He went one better than the celebrated guard on the Paris-Lyons-Méditerranée, who had one wife and establishment in Paris and another at Marseilles, each unaware of the other's existence; for he kept a wife at Yarkand (whither he often accompanied us on tour) and *two* at Kashgar, one of them living at the Consulate and the other in the town. All went well until one day news reached the Consulate wife not only that the Yarkand lady existed, but that she proposed coming to Kashgar. As Mrs. Abdulla No. 1 wailed to D., "It's bad enough his marrying that dreadful person in the bazaar—if this Yarkandlik comes here I don't know what will happen!" However, not long afterwards glad news came to the effect that the Yarkand wife's late husband, who had been to Leh trading, had come back and had been so annoyed with her for marrying Abdulla (her divorce had only been a *raja'i* or "non-binding" one) that he had promptly slit her nose! Neither of Abdulla's Kashgar wives was afraid of her after that. 586 595

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[1] From the Arabic root *raja'a*, "return," the wife being lawfully permitted to re-marry the same husband. After *ba'in* divorce this is illegal.

D.'s maid, Aisha Khan, who was by profession a laundry-woman, had a good-for-nothing husband who had lived on her for years and refused to grant her a divorce. In the spring of 1924 he married another laundry-woman and began spending her money too—a *double* "washerwoman's husband." It was not till just before we left that Aisha Khan, by offering to give up all the household property she had brought with her on marriage, induced him to divorce her. This was not the only case of "washerwoman's husband" we came across. The wife of one of the Consulate staff employed a fine strapping woman-servant, the wife of an under-sized nonentity in the bazaar who never did a hand's turn. D. spoke to the Consulate lady about this woman, asking whether she was unhappy and whether the man was not ashamed to live on his wife. "Oh, no," was the reply, "he is a very good husband to So-and-so, very *yawash* (quiet) and tame; sits at home quietly and does not interfere with her comings and goings or make trouble in any way. She tells people that he works and is earning good money; but every one knows that he lives on her." 595

The weakness of their position and the looseness of the marriage tie undoubtedly bear hardly on women in towns, who have no security in their home life. Cases are only too frequent of wives legally deserted by their husbands with one or more children to look after and insufficient maintenance or none at all. Babies are often left on the steps of mosques on festival days, perhaps to be adopted by some good Mussulman, perhaps not. But it must be remembered that conditions are much more healthy among the country people; while even in the towns the position of women is not nearly so bad as in most Muhammadan countries. Only the wives of the wealthiest are strictly veiled, and even they visit each other's houses, as in Persia. The women of the middle and lower classes have their own riding-donkeys and do their shopping in the bazaars freely; as often as not it is the wife 562

562 who holds the purse-strings and does the selling of the farm-produce as well as the buying. Nowadays it is quite a common thing for a married woman to have her own profession, dress-making, cap-embroidering, cotton-spinning, midwifery, cooking at restaurants, dyeing, soap-making, sorcery, laundering, brokering and so on. Out of doors they wear the *chumbal* or stiff rectangular veil, but most of the time this is thrown back over the head; only when some important male personage comes along, such as a Chinese official or an Aqsaqal or a British Consul-General, do they pull the veil hastily down again for a few moments. This is in strong contrast to India, where only the women of the lowest castes go about unveiled.

It must also be remembered that the average Turki man is a lazy, good-natured, easy-going, rather slow-witted person, so that the sharper-tongued, quicker-witted and more energetic woman more than holds her own—so long, at any rate, as she can keep her husband at her side. On the whole, the term *mazlum-kishi* (oppressed person), which is the regular word for " woman " in Kashgaria, need not be taken too seriously. A woman above the average in looks or wit profits as much by the looseness of the marriage tie as her less-favoured sister suffers from it; she can exchange an uncongenial husband for a better one with very little difficulty. A Kashgar beauty dates her past life by her successive husbands, just as a racing enthusiast in this country dates his by Derby winners. I cannot say, however, that I heard of any woman approaching the matrimonial record of a certain good-looking Mussulman British subject of scarcely more than middle age, who was credited with having espoused over sixty different wives in his time, and was still going strong when we left.

854 A married woman does not reach her full social stature until she is thirty years old or more, when she attains the dignity of *jawanlik.* A *jawan* is a woman who has attained years of discretion and is entitled to the privilege of braiding her hair in two long plaits. This " coming of age " is an important and festive event, like a wedding; the husband gives a large party called the *jawanlik toi*, to which both men and women are invited (they do not, of course, mix); at this feast she appears for the first time with her hair braided and wearing a special kind of shirt, known as the *jawanchi konglak.* She is now more important and respected than before; she is also worth more in the marriage market, for men do not like child-brides who know nothing and may at any moment

run away back to their parents, whereas they will actually 884
spend several hundred tengas on *toiluk* (trousseau) for the privilege of marrying a good-looking *jawan*. In the snatches of love-songs given below it will be noticed that the poet's "mistress" is often called *jawan*, never *chokan* or *qiz* (girl). The popular standpoint is expressed in the following old rhyme:

Jān qadrini kīm bilsun?	Who is it who knows what health is worth?
Aghriq bilma'e sāq na bilsun.	Not the healthy man who has never been ill.
Er qadrini kīm bilsun?	What woman is it that knows worth in a man?
Jawān bilma'e qiz na bilsun.	Not the girl who has never been a *jawan*.

To marry one's daughter to an infidel—a Chinaman or a 582
Hindu—is regarded as no less disgraceful than to put her on the streets, and only the poorest do it. It is significant that the word used for a lady of easy virtue—*jallāb*—is also applied to Turki wives of Chinese (other than Chinese Mussulmans) and Hindus. They are excommunicated by the priests and ostracized by their class. There are compensations, however. Chinamen and Hindus are much better husbands than Turkis, and the wives of "infidels" usually amass wealth. The wife of a Hindu is in a particularly strong position. Her husband has no legal rights over her; if she runs away, the mullas will not lift a finger for him, and he must "shell out" again if he wants another wife. She can thus hold over him the threat of returning to her family, and tap his money-bags with confidence for herself and her relations. When he dies, she usually gets away with some or all of his property; two or three cases were brought before me in which this had happened. But it is interesting to note that Islam usually triumphs at the last; an infidel's wife will often use her wealth to purchase an "indulgence" on her death-bed and the right to a Mussulman burial. When she feels her end approaching, she will leave her home and settle in another town, where she is received back into the fold by the Imam and the *uttuz-oghle*. She gives liberal donations to shrines and dedicates some or all of her land as *waqf* (religious trust) to the Church. The Qazi prescribes certain prayers and observances for the donor, who then dies in peace and is buried with full Mussulman rites. There is one serious drawback, however, to marrying a Hindu trader; and that is the fact that if and when he

582 returns to India or dies, he or his next-of-kin, as the case may be, invariably demands his male children, if any; his right to them, as to his own property, is recognized by the mullas. If the boys are less than five years old, the father leaves money according to law for their maintenance until that age, but arranges through the *panchayat* (association of Hindu traders in the town) for their despatch to India as soon as possible afterwards. This is naturally a grievance with the Turki mothers.

764 The observances connected with death and burial are elaborate and expensive. On the day of the death alms in cash and a piece of soap each are given to the beggars. This is according to the Qur'anic injunction, but the "wakes" which follow are not *shar'i* (according to Muhammadan law), but *rasmi* or "customary," i.e. pagan or Chinese. They are not approved by the Church. On the third day (in well-to-do households) the whole quarter, rich and poor, is invited to a feast at which not only are large quantities of food consumed, but presents of clothes are given to all and sundry; this, I understand, is a Chinese custom. On the seventh day another feast is given, at which only relations and friends are present. The actual funeral takes place on the day following death. Those present wear a mourning costume consisting of black clothes with a white waistband; this latter is another concession to Chinese ideas, according to which the mourning colour is white, not black. Expenditure in connection with a funeral varies from 30 to 500 taels, according to the capacity of the household; only a small proportion of this is set off by the presents, called *ta'ziyāt*, given to the next-of-kin by his friends and relations. Great importance is attached to the lamentations (*qushāq*) of the deceased's relatives at a funeral, which are regarded as helping him in some way—an obvious relic of paganism. According to an old popular rhyme:

Sahr waqtida chirlaghalé	For crowing at the dawn
Chā khuraz yakhshi;	Spotted chanticleer is best;
Qushāq qushup yighlaghalé	For keening at a wake
Qarindāsh yakhshi.	A loved one is the best.

Some of the elegiacs sung by widows are really beautiful; for example:

Qupselār Allah dep qupghān Khojam
Yatselār Allah dep yatghan Khojam.
Yāz uzūqum, Khojam,
Qish yapinjim, Khojam.
Sui-yoq kulda qāldem,
Sayasi-yoq bostānda qāldem.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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THE WALLS OF KHOTAN

000

A STORY-TELLER AND HIS AUDIENCE, KARGHALIK

[Face p. 204]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

(Translation)

764 When you arose, oh my Lord, it was with God's name on your lips;
When you lay down, it was in God's name.
In summer you fed me, oh my Lord;
In winter you were my cloak.
I am left in a lake with no water in it,
I am left in a garden in which there is no shade.

105 563 In considering the manners, customs, folklore, etc., of the Tarim Basin, it must be remembered that considerable differences exist between the four or five chief oases, corresponding roughly to their geographical positions. To differentiate between them and make a comparative study of material from the different towns would be impossible in the space at my disposal, even if I possessed the necessary knowledge. Speaking generally, however, it may be remarked that Kashgar is the least mediæval and at the same time the most Mussulman of the Six Cities. Culturally it belongs to the Transcaspian Khanates, Khoqand, Bokhara, Samarqand and Khiva, strongholds of Islam. Owing to its proximity to the Russian frontier and the strong interest taken in it by the Muscovite Government since the seventies, it has a thin—a very thin—veneer of Russian culture. Aqsu, 300 miles nearer Urumchi and separated from Russian territory by the tremendous barrier of the Central Tien Shan, is a predominantly Uigur city with strong Mongol and Chinese strains. Kucha, 200 miles further east, is also an ancient Uigur city, and has a history and an art of its own. Further east still, Qarashahr is the chief centre of that formidable and unpleasant race, Chinese by culture and Mussulman by religion, the Tungans. Yarkand is the meeting-place of the nations; in its culture neither China nor Russia are of much account, and such foreign influence as there is comes through Afghanistan from Persia and through Kashmir from India. The great oasis of Khotan or Ilchi is in many ways the most interesting of all, for it is the part of the Tarim Basin which has been least affected by outside influences, including Islam. It was probably a flourishing pagan State long before Buddhism reached it from India. For a thousand years it was the seat of an Indo-Scythian civilization under Chinese influence, with a rich and ornate Buddhism as its official religion; was it not to Khotan that the Han Emperor Ming Ti sent in A.D. 65 the famous Mission which brought back Buddhism to Cathay? The Kingdom fought hard against Islam, holding out for

105 563 centuries, and even now that Faith is noticeably weaker here and paganism stronger than at Yarkand or Kashgar. With this fact is undoubtedly connected—whether as cause or effect it is difficult to say—Khotan's pre-eminence in arts and crafts. As I have already remarked, its people weave better, embroider better, work metal better and design more artistically than those of any other oasis in the province, not even excepting Kucha. At Khotan, singing and playing are not a monopoly of the professionals, but are practised by all classes; D. tells me that the dancing at the women's parties is noticeably more natural and lively than the somewhat stilted (though never ungraceful) measures danced by the beauties of Kashgar.

535 The following is an account from one of D's. letters of the dancing at a typical Kashgar "purdah party."

> "When the food had been cleared away, the three musicians set up a song and a lively tune on the guitar and tambourine. After a becoming hesitation one of the guests got up and danced. It was curious dancing, rhythmical, rather stiff, without much variety in the steps, but a great deal of graceful arm-work, yet quite different from the typical Indian nautch. As she danced, one by one the other guests rose, walked up to her with money in their hands, passed their arms over her head, and then dropped the money into a tray in front of the musicians. When every one including myself had given something, the dancer turned to one of the other guests and danced in front of her until she got up and took the floor, when the first one subsided into a corner. This process was repeated until all the guests had danced except myself. During the dancing of each guest all the others put money into the musicians' tray with the same ceremonial, often only a copper or two, but always something. Some of the richer ones dropped presents of Indian cloth of gold, Chinese silk or Russian velvet, into the musicians' tray. Then, as every one looked at me, I got up and gave them a Highland sword-dance, which was a huge success and brought the band large sums."

533 The Eastern Turkis are a musical race. At Kashgar professional minstrels abound and are in request at every party. The instruments most commonly in use are the *dotar*, [534] a two-stringed guitar; the Persian *rabāb*, a six-stringed kind of mandoline; and the *dop* or tambourine. The *surnai* or pipe of Afghanistan is also occasionally heard. The ballad is still a living verse-form, and the troubadours of Artush are famous for their improvizations on any subject. Two days after the defeat and execution of the Titai a ribald ballad, which I took down later, was being sung about him in the streets. The young men and boys sing everywhere they go;

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their strong voices are quite untrained and the sounds they emit are sometimes astonishing, but one can detect traces of melody even among the saxophone-like warblings of the donkey-drivers. D. is not a great musician, and my ignorance on the subject is " extensive and peculiar," but it was impossible not to be struck by the tunefulness and intelligibility of the local music compared with that of India and (still more) of China Proper.

In the course of my studies of the Eastern Turki language I transcribed many of the songs sung by the beggars and wandering musicians. There is no more difficult task in a foreign language, and it was only with the invaluable assistance of Murad Qari that I was able to puzzle out and translate the words; Qari himself was more than once at fault, for some of the verses are very old and the singers themselves could not always explain them. The " Ballad of Said Nochi Gangung " is of Kashgari origin, and my favourite quatrain, " My white hawk hath flown from my hand," would seem from its reference to the hills of Besh Karim, to be the work of an Artush bard. But it was at Yarkand, Khotan and—of all places—Polu, high up among the wild gorges of the Kunlun south of Keriya, a few miles from the lofty northern rim of Tibet, that Qari and I found our best "bits." It was most surprising to find a strain of true poetry in so remote a place as Polu. At a feast I gave in the house of the *yuz-bashi* (headman), a simple affair of tea, bread and boiled sheep, with a singsong to follow, there was a thin-faced lad with a great sheepskin cap who twanged his guitar like a master and sang verses of his own composition which would have done credit to the shepherds of Arcadia or Sicily of old. The material I collected may be divided into songs of poverty and exile, love-songs, comic ditties and popular snatches of various kinds, and ballads. Here are some specimens, with a Turki original in each class to show the verse-form:

(A) SONGS OF POVERTY AND EXILE

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(1)

Ātam surse, ānam surse, " Yuraidur " danglär
  " Kungle ghamda, kuze yāshda yiglaidur " danglär.

If my father ask you, if my mother ask you,
  Say " He is distraught."
Say " His heart is sorrowful, his eyes are full of tears."
  Say " He weeps for you."

(2)

The choughs are among the mountain-tops
The torrents flow through the foot-hills;
Poverty has left its mark upon me.
Where are my father and my mother?

(3)

The road to Andijan is sandy,
None has e'er put sickle to it;
We are two poor brothers,
None was e'er so poor as we.

(4)

My horse is gone from before me,
My whip is no more at my side.
E'en though this be my native land
Poverty is come upon me.

(B) Love-songs

(5)

Rabābimning dastasi	The neck of my guitar is painted like a partridge
Keklik-qāshi, yilān-bāshi;	And like a snake's head inlaid;
Izd'sām tapilmaedur	But search where I may I cannot find
Sikilah jawān qalam-qāshi.	My Love of the curls and the pencilled eyebrows.

(6)

The cocks are crowing to each other:
Surely it is the dawn?
At the street-corner men are weeping to one another:
Surely a famous Lady is dead?

(7)

Is there a pea within the twanging,
Twanging of my lute?
Is there a stone within the breast
Of her who sets me afire?

(8)

I became a butterfly, I flew away,
I came to thy garden of flowers.
Though my stature be so tiny
I am afire with love for my mistress.

(9)

So great is my love for my dear one,
E'en though I planted it, it could grow no taller;
So fair is the river of my tears,
If I watered my horse from it, he would never be satisfied.

(10)

Altunda chilim bolse	Let my pipe be of gold
Marwārid kuze bolse	Let its eyes be of pearl[1]
Bir chaksām tambākungnī,	Let me smoke but one puff of thy tobacco,
Kuyah ute adā bolse	The fire that consumes me would be appeased.

(11)

Behind my back the banks of my canal are broken,
No one can keep them from falling;
This mistress of mine is a mischievous mistress,
No one knows what she will do next.

(12)

Oh that I had a samovar!
I would have tea ready boiling,
And while she drank but one cup
My Love would sport with me awhile.

(13)

My white hawk hath sped from my hand
To the hills of Besh Karim;
Howsoe'er I lure her, she will not come back to my luring,
She hath flown to the Garden of Paradise.[2]

(C) MISCELLANEOUS

(14)

If I would have a red rose blooming
I must not pluck it in the bud;
If I want not to fall in love
I must not stay in this city.

(15)

Fine white cloth, fine red cloth,
Fine cloth dyed all colours;
No word is there of the lads that are gone
And all the maids are sighing.

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[1] I.e. let it be inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

[2] The white hawk (*toighun*) is very highly prized in Central Asia (see p. 233). Besh Karim, to the north-east of Kashgar, is the most fertile and picturesque district of the oasis.

(16)

Taqdir-ullah tāghni yeratde
Tāghni yeratde ;
Tāgh-ārasini qaranghu dep
Aini yeratde.

Almighty God created the mountains, the mountains ;
Then because it was dark in the depths of the mountains, He created the moon.

(17)

If I sow maize upon a mountain-top,
"I'll scatter to the winds," it says ;
If I take a sweetheart from a far country,
"I'll throw you o'er," she says.

(18)

A fearful tiger lying on the path
Can keep even a lion at bay ;
He upon whom has fallen his father's curse
Can go no further on life's way.

(19)

(Refrain)

Keling, yārim, kullawalilé	Come, my Beloved, laugh with me,
Khursand bolup oinawalilé :	Let us dance and happy be.

Some of the rhymes about particular towns are amusing ; Keriya, for instance, has a reputation for gallantry :

(20)

On my right hand are ten rings,
The stones are false, only the hoops are true ;
Of ten pretty things the lads of Keriya say
Only one is true.

(21)

Aqsu kalalāre simiz, surun yerni khalaidur ;
Keriya balalāre yaman, ch'ailik yarni khalaidur.

Aqsu kine are fat kine, they love a luscious meadow ;
Keriya lads are bad lads, they love a pretty woman.

(D) BALLADS

These are sung (never written) either in the tripping eight-syllable metre of "Hiawatha," or in rhyming quatrains. They are composed by anonymous minstrels on passing events of importance ; no one, I was told, seemed ever to know who had composed a particular ballad. Of those sung in quatrains the following stanzas are typical; they concern the murder of a British subject called Qadir Haji at Karghalik in 1910:

(22)

Āla ātning ālasi	Like a piebald mare
Sungachida balasi	(That has lost) the foal at her side,
Qushuq qushup yighlaidur	Weeps and wails, lamenting
Qādir Hājimning ānasi.	The mother of my Qadir Haji.
Āq almaning chichake,	White buds were on the apple-tree,
Nimalār bolde pichake ?	What has become of the blossom ?
Yollda tushup qālipdur	On the highway where it fell
Qādir Hājimning tilpake.	Lies the cap of my Qadir Haji.

Some of the ballads are comic, as for example a short one I heard at Khotan beginning delightfully:

Mulla Tokhta 'kam Unbāshi
Kirde bazargha Mingbāshi.

(23)

THE SAD STORY OF MULLA TOKHTA AND THE FARTHING'S WORTH OF TRIPE

Brother Mulla Tokhta, headman of our village,
Swaggered into market as if he were the Mayor.[1]
He hired himself a donkey
And bought a rope for a halfpenny
And a piece of tripe for a farthing
And hung the tripe from the donkey's neck.
The donkey promptly bolted
And kicked the beggar in the stomach.
(Mulla Tokhta) walked home with the tripe,
Took his knife without a handle and cut it up,
Took his spoon without a handle and stirred it,
Said "Let's have a feed," and was just sitting down
When in burst six policemen,
Ate up all the tripe and went away.

The best ballad I got was a Kashgar one which appears to be the latter part of a long epic dealing with the exploits and death of Said Nochi, a famous "Gangung" or brigand and popular hero of Kashgaria in the early years of the present century. Owing to his popularity the Chinese did not dare to arrest him openly and send him to Kashgar to be dealt with by the Tao Tai, for fear of his being rescued by his friends on the way. The lines literally translated below describe the stratagem by which they inveigled him to Kashgar and the manner of his end. The minstrel who sang it began with a quaint prologue consisting of a quatrain of the "Songs of Poverty" type, followed by another quatrain in a different metre in praise of Kashgar. The ballad itself is in the same metre as "Mullah Tokhta 'kam."

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[1] *Mingbashi* means literally "headman of a thousand families," and *unbashi* "headman of ten families."

(24)

The Ballad of Said Nochi Gangung

(Prologue)

I am twenty-six years old,
Poverty has fallen upon my head:
To whom shall I tell my story?
To my dear one, my brother.
  Of ninety-nine thousand cities
    Is Kashgar the queen,
  Kashgar is the city
    Whence Said Nochi Gangung came

* * * * *

Said Akhun[1] went away,
Six months he travelled from city to city,
Twenty-five cities did he visit.
Then came he to Old Turfan[2]
At its famous shrine.[3]
Forty days he kept the Fast of Silence.
On the forty-first day,
Having completed his Silence,
He returned whence he had come.
Then he came to Uch Turfan.
As he was sitting in a tea-house there[4]
Magistrate Wang happened to see him.
"Oho, Nochi, Said Gangung,
Five hundred soldiers have I here,
Be captain over them, I pray thee.
Ninety-five taels monthly pay
And thy rations will I give thee."
When he had finished speaking
Said Akhun, whom men call Gangung,
Answered and said "So be it."
In the city called Uch Turfan
Of five hundred soldiers
Became he commander and took up his abode.

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[1] "*Akhun*" in Kashgaria is practically equivalent to "Mr." or "Sir."

[2] An ancient town situated in a depression below sea-level, 100 miles S.E. of Urumchi; so called at Kashgar to distinguish it from Uch Turfan.

[3] Literally "like the Ashāb ul Kahf," which, I believe, is a famous shrine in one of the Holy Cities.

[4] Literally, "at the samovar," because all tea-shops use them.

In the city called Uch Turfan
Fifty months he sojourned.[1]
When the fifty months were over
Magistrate Wang summoned him.
“ Oho, Gangung, Said Nochi,
Since thou camest to this city
Fifty months have passed and gone,
And no high office hast thou held.
I will give thee a sealed letter ;[2]
This paper take with thee (sc. to Kashgar)
And give it to the Tao Tai.
Of one of the four gates
He will appoint thee Captain.”
When his enemy had spoken thus
(Said Nochi took) his own death-warrant[3]
And fastened it in his waistband.
At the time of evening prayer
Brought he it to Kashgar city.
When he came to Kashgar city
To his mother's house he went
And knocked upon the door.
His mother, prudent woman,
Opened the door and came out.
Seeing Said Akhun,
She asked him how he fared ;
“ O my son, Sait Gangung,
I have been separated from thee
These fifty months past.
After all these fifty months
If thou'lt stay one night with me
I shall attain my heart's desire.”
When his mother said these words
He stayed one night with her.
On the morrow at dawn's first light
He sought out Mamat Khan
Expounded to him the matter ;
Then went they out to Hazrat Apak
And on a couch by the big lake
Were sitting at a tea-house.
Suddenly came four men-at-arms ;
“ Oho Gangung Sait Nochi
The Lord Tao Tai summons thee.”
When he heard the words, Lord Tao Tai
He leapt up in his place.
“ God's will be done,” he said.[4]

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[1] “ Fifty months ” is used vaguely to express a long interval of time.

[2] The Sino-Turki word *yudan* is used ; it means a written order from a magistrate or high official.

[3] Note the “ tragic irony ” in the best Greek Tragedy style.

[4] *Alhukm'ullah*, the words prescribed by the Qur'an to be said on the point of death. Tragic irony again.

When he came before the Lord Tao Tai (70)
He said his say, word by word,[1]
Made deep obeisance and sat down.
They placed a cup of tea before him.
When he had drunk the Chinese tea
He unfastened his waist-band (75)
Took out the death-warrant and gave it (to the Tao Tai).
When (Nochi) gave him the death-warrant
The Tao Tai took and read it
And bowed down his head.
Looking closely at Said Akhun, (80)
He gave order to fire a salute of one gun
And spoke as follows:
" O Nochi Said Gangung
If thou hadst stayed in Kashgar[2]
And hadst disported thyself like a red rose-bud (85)
Thou needest never have gone to that city (Uch Turfan)
Nor stayed there until thou brought me
Thine own death-warrant. (90)
Now, O Gangung Said Nochi
Thou hast brought thine own death-warrant to me.
The names of seven Lords are upon it,
It is sealed with the seal of office. (95)
Tell me, dost thou believe in the Power of God? "
When the Tao Tai asked this question
(Nochi replied) " O Amban, Lord Amban,
This is indeed an order of the Government;
I believe in the Power of God; (100)
Whatever thou hast to do this day, do it."
When he had spoken, the Lord Tao Tai
Ordered his carriage to be made ready,
Ordered a waggon to be brought;
A salute of nine guns was fired. (105)
Sait Akhun went off in the waggon
Five thousand men followed after him.
When he came to the city gate
Six executioners passed before him.
" Oho Nochi Said Gangung (110)
Shall we shoot thee from in front
Or shall we shoot thee from behind?"
" Shoot me from behind," he said.
The Chief of the Six Executioners
Fired but one shot. (115)
From this world to the next
With God's name on his lips journeyed Said Nochi.

The following is a selection from a number of proverbs and popular sayings I came across while studying the Eastern

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[1] The meaning of the Turki line is doubtful. It may refer to his ceremonial greetings to the Tao Tai.

[2] The next seven lines are extremely involved and I have been obliged to paraphrase somewhat.

Turki language. I was interested to find scarcely any of them identical with the Persian proverbs I had collected at Kerman, in spite of the strong Persian influence in the language. What is still more remarkable, however, is the fact that only two of them (Nos. 4 and 16) correspond with proverbs current in modern Turkey; this, at any rate, is what I found on examination of that most exhaustive collection of Osmanli Turkish popular sayings, "Osmanische Sprichwörter"[1]

PROVERBS AND POPULAR SAYINGS

(1) *Ishak mīnmagan ādam ishak minip ulturedur.*
When a man who has never been on a donkey gets one to ride, he kills it. (Cf. " beggars on horseback ").

(2) *Ishak khotake minmaganlār emde minār tai*
Arpabadiān ichmaganlār emde ichār chai.
Those who never even rode a donkey's foal, now ride yearling horses; those who never even drank barley gruel now drink tea. (Nouveaux riches.)

(3) *Mushukni bir ishgha buiradem, mushuk quruqini buirade.*
I gave an order to the cat, and the cat gave it to its tail. (Refers to a habit of Oriental servants of passing an order from one to another right down through the household, with the result that the thing never gets done.)

(4) *Haiwān-ning a'lasi tashida, insān-ning a'lasi ichida.*
A beast's spots are on the outside, a man's on the inside. (Cf. the Osmanli Turkish proverb *haiwan a'lasi tishinda, insan a'lasi ichinda.*)

(5) *Tūgening qosaqe āchse, yentaq-qa boinini uzutedur.*
When the camel's stomach is empty, he stretches down his neck even to the thorn-bush.

(6) *Yitkān mālning sape altun.*
The whip that's lost always had a golden handle.

(7) *Bai baigha, su saigha.*
The rich stand by the rich as the stream seeks the desert.

(8) *Hunjur marjān tāsh iken* Jewels and coral are but stones
Arpa puchāq āsh iken. Barley and beans make soup.
(i.e. riches are no use to a man who is lost in the desert.)

(9) *Abdāl yamānlase, khurjingha ziyān.*
If a beggar loses his temper, it is his pouch that suffers. (Cf. the Persian proverb *qahr-i-darvish ru-y-i-darvish*, " the wrath of a beggar is on his own head." For the Abdals, see Sykes, " Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia," p. 242.

(10) *Hawaning guldúre bar, yamghúre yoq*
Buwaning āchiqe bar, maqdūre yoq.
If the wind roars, there'll be no rain;
If an old man storms, he storms impotently.

(11) *Bermās qizning nirkhe ustun.*
The girl whom her father does not want to give in marriage is priced high.

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[1] "K. K. Orientalische Akademie," Wien, 1865.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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(12) *Oghre birnima tapalmase, uzining tilpakini oghurla'edur.*
When a thief can't find anything else, he steals his own cap.

(13) *Puli-barning gepe ong, puli-yoqning gepe tong.*
A rich man's word is always right, a poor man's talk is always silly.

(14) *Az yegan un yer, fik yegan bir yer.*
He who eats sparingly eats ten times, he who eats too much eats once.
(i.e., he gets ill and in the long run eats less than the other.)

(15) *Ustun bāqip tukursang, yānip chushūr yuzung-ga.*
If you spit up into the air, it will fall back upon your face.
(i.e. don't bandy words with a low fellow or you will get worse than you give.) The Osmanli Turkish proverb is *Ruzgāra tukurān yuzina tukurur.*

(16) *Sui-bar ja'ida ut yoq*
Uti-bar ja'ida su yoq
Hawa salqin pasha yoq
Ata birlan āna yoq.
At the camping-place where there's water, there's no grazing; where there's grazing, there's no water; where there are no mosquitoes, the wind is bitter; when you've got your father, your mother isn't there.
(Cf. "Never the time and the place and the loved one all together.")

(17) *Ishak-ga taghārni ebarmang*
Don't send the load after the donkey (sc. bring the donkey back to the load—"putting the cart before the horse").

(18) *Khurūs waqtni ma'lūm qeladur, manzilni ishak.*
The cock tells you the time, the donkey tells you where your halting-place is (by braying).

(19) *Bar baqīr, yoq altun.*
Where there's copper, there's no gold.
(i.e. a man is either gold all through, or copper all through.)

(20) *Ādam uttuz, Khuda toqquz.*
Man says thirty, God says nine (Man proposes . . .).

(21) *Ishengan tāghda kik yatmās.*
The mountain-goat does not lurk among frequented mountains. (i.e. if a thing is worth getting, you have to go far afield and take trouble to get it.)

(22) *Qūsh qanātin, ār ātin.*
The eagle has his wings, the man his horse.

(2) *Buyerda tukhe-sutdin bilak hama nersa tapaledur.*
You can get anything here except chicken's milk (said of a very fertile country).

(24) *Man aldurāiman ketghalé, ishakim aldurāidur yatghalé.*
I am in a hurry to go on, my donkey is in a hurry to lie down. (one man's meat is another man's poison).

(25) *Ishak hangraghān ja'igha barmang.*
Don't go where the donkey brays (if you want to avoid your fellows; in Chinese Turkistan, where there are people there are donkeys and where there are donkeys there are people).

The most curious and amusing piece of popular lore I came across was a quaint litany which I took down at Khotan. The refrain *Panah berghil Khudayim* means, almost literally, " Good Lord, deliver us " and there must be some echo of Christianity in it; but whether it dates back to the Nestorian Church which flourished in these parts between the 7th and 14th centuries, or whether it is of more recent origin, it is difficult to say.

A KHOTAN LITANY

Yollgha tushgan patikdin	From quicksands on the road
Tinjip qalgan qatikdin	From curds that have gone bad
Panah berghil, Khudayim.	Good Lord, deliver us.

From the thorny branch of the wild apricot
From the old of womankind
Good Lord, deliver us.

From the nose-bag of a stallion (i.e. from being within reach of his teeth),
From a wife who has taken to thieving
Good Lord, deliver us.

From the hard clods of a salt plain (because they hurt when they hit you),
From the hard words of an old wife
Good Lord, deliver us.

From a horse that trots with his tail straight out behind him,
From a policeman who arrests you without a warrant
Good Lord, deliver us.

From a learned man without manners,
From a hen that is perpetually clucking
Good Lord, deliver us.

From rats in the hay-loft,
From a child-bride who runs away back to her parents
Good Lord, deliver us.

From a threshing-floor with nothing to thresh on it,
From a guest who comes just at harvest-time
Good Lord, deliver us.

From the weirs of Daraskal (because they are so slippery that you fall in if you try to cross the canal by them),
From the pencilled eyebrows of a woman
Good Lord, deliver us.

CHAPTER XIV

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS OF HEAVEN

487 IN the autumn of 1923 we carried out a tour to which we had long looked forward, north-eastward along the southern slopes of the Tien Shan to Uch Turfan, Aqsu and beyond, returning by the ordinary plains route *viâ* the Tarim River valley and the Maralbashi jungles.

Our way at first led for 220 miles through the outer ranges of the Tien Shan to the frontier town of Uch Turfan. We were not so fortunate as usual in our transport, for all that the Aqsaqal of Kashgar could raise for us was a mixed lot of inferior ponies and donkeys in charge of a lazy and inefficient boy of fourteen, the son of the real carrier who ought to have come with us. Leaving Kashgar on September 2, D. and I accompanied by Murad Qari rode 54 miles across the rich lands of Besh Karim and a strip of desert to the Kalta Yailaq oasis, near the north edge of which we found our tents pitched. It was a hot day, and the march was the longest we ever did. According to our usual time-saving custom we had sent the caravan ahead the day before; the orderly in charge had gone seven miles beyond the appointed camping-place, so that it was nearly eleven o'clock at night before we got in.

Two days later we crossed a low pass among the barren foot-hills north of Sughun Qaraul; the summit is marked by a grim shrine called Allahyar Beg, consisting of little but a post decorated with the skull and backbone of a donkey and the cap of a man who had once died there. We saw few travellers on the road, and those mostly traders in grain and local cotton cloth between Uch Turfan and Kashgar. One evening I talked with a young man of Artush whom we overtook. He had four donkeys with him, on which he told me he was taking flour up into the mountains to trade with the Kirghiz for sheep. He did this two or three times in the year, he said,

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IN THE YANGI ART JILGHA, TIEN SHAN MOUNTAINS

[Face p. 218]

487 and went all over the mountains. He seemed a good type of youth, sturdy, cheerful and independent.

133 The Yai Dōbe plain, on which we now debouched, is a small but perfect example of the inland drainage basins characteristic of Central Asia. Situated at an average elevation of 5,000 feet, it is some 60 miles long by 15-20 broad and is enclosed on the north by one of the parallel ranges of the Tien Shan with peaks up to 13,000 feet, on the south and east by foothills rising to 8,000 feet. It has no outlet, but boasts its own miniature Lop Nor in the shape of a salt lake near its south-eastern corner. Like the *hāmūns* of Persian Baluchistan and Sistan, this lake varies in size according to the rainfall in the mountains, from practically nothing to a sheet of water 40 or 50 square miles in area. The rest of the Yai Dōbe plian is partly barren, partly covered with tamarisks and a sparse forest of desert poplar. Some of these trees attain a great age and size; they are not in the least like poplars, resembling rather the British oak. Here and there in the forest are springs of fresh or slightly brackish water, each with farmsteads or Kirghiz tents in the vicinity. In the spring and autumn the woodland is delightful, but in summer the mosquitos and gadflies for which both it and the Maralbashi jungles to the south are notorious make it uninhabitable by man or beast.

487 For fifty miles we marched across this curious plain. On September 5 we passed out of the desert-poplar forest and camped the same evening at the springs of Yairam Bulak. Here two families of Kirghiz had pitched their *aq-ois* near a couple of tiny crofts shaded by willows, landmarks [574] for miles in the great sweep of bare plain. We liked the Kirghiz of these hills and got on well with them, but we could not help noticing that they were less hospitable than their cousins of our beloved "Alps of Qungur." They never asked us into their *aq-ois*, nor did they seem to regard us guests as the others (often quite embarassingly) did. It struck me that there might be two reasons for this. In the first place, living on the Russian border, they are at once less secure and more sophisticated. In the second, a trade route much used by Turki merchants passes through their territory; these men, I was told, were in the habit of taking supplies whenever they 609 could and not paying for them. But the Tien Shan Kirghiz 487 could be friendly enough when once their confidence had been gained. The ladies of Yairam Bulak crowded round D., whose

487 like they had never seen before. They were particularly impressed by the gold in my teeth; they asked D. about it, 609 evidently thinking it was a kind of ornament. They also asked her what my other wife was like, and whether she never travelled. D. explained that in the West men had only one wife at a time, whereupon they exclaimed "Aren't you lonely?"

361 In this country nomadic and settled Kirghiz are mixed, not separated by an uninhabited belt and a distinct difference in level, as in the mountains to the south of the Kashgarian plain. Our next camp was at a scattered village of crofts called Pichan; behind it, a line of the curious domed tombs of Kirghiz-land cresting a bluff showed that the settlement was an old one. We made great friends with the enormously fat and jovial Beg of the place, a regular Falstaff. He told us that the little community had been almost ruined three years before, when the disturbances in Semirechia following the introduction of the Soviet régime had resulted in the migration of thousands of families, Sarts and Kirghiz, to Chinese territory. "They brought huge flocks of sheep and goats with them," he said, "which ate up all the grass, so that there was none for the Pichan flocks and they died. Our stock was thus destroyed, and now we can't work it up again because we have no surplus [651] for breeding. But the *Khitai* (Chinese) have not reduced our cattle tax, fixed many years ago at 15 dachins (1½*d.*) per head—they still take fifty taels a year off us, though there are no sheep. But we make no complaint, because though there is a good deal of cultivation we pay no land tax. If we attracted the Amban's attention he might find out about the cultivation, and then we would have to pay both land and cattle tax."

The fat Beg found a congenial spirit in the cheerful Hafiz, with whom he "swapped lies" uproariously far into the night. Next morning as we marched out of Pichan I happened to look round, and there were Hafiz and the Beg riding along arm-in-arm, with broad grins on their faces, each wearing the other's hat. It was one of the funniest sights I have ever seen, Hafiz in the huge black lambskin Kirghiz cap and the Beg with Hafiz' *dopa* perched like a Glengarry on the top of his vast head and face.

[312] There was plenty of good water at Pichan, but at our next 487 halting-place twenty miles farther up among the bare hills at Qizil Eshma, we very nearly had to go without. A family of Kirghiz were encamped at the mouth of a small side-glen apparently just as dry as the main valley. The servants I

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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sent up it to look for water came back saying that there was none for "two potais" (5 miles), only a spring high up among the mountains which they could not reach. I was not inclined to reload and toil many miles farther up the valley to the next halting-place, so I thought I would have a look myself. Half a mile up the side-glen the soil was damp, and a little farther I came upon a string of tiny pools. The flow was almost imperceptible, and a few yards further on the soil was again dry. But it was enough; we filled our buckets with sweet water, at the rate of about one per hour, and the animals were all watered by midnight. Evidently the Kirghiz (who were particularly shy at this place) had misled our servants and concealed the existence of the spring for fear lest we should drink up all the water and perhaps foul the supply.

Our next camp was a pleasant one, at Qaragor Kul ten thousand feet up among the very tops of the gently-rounded grey-green hills. Here there are no springs at all; a certain amount of rain falls, judging by the grass which covers the land, but there must be something in the geological structure which prevents the formation of springs. On the other hand there are several shallow basins in which the rain-water collects; the Kirghiz camp with their herds of ponies and flocks of sheep and goats beside one of these rain-ponds until they have drunk it dry, when they pass on to another. Qaragor and its neighbourhood lie within the jurisdiction of the Amban of Kelpin two marches to the south, an interesting place well off the beaten track which I would have liked to visit had there been time.

Next day we crossed two passes and descended a long glen, past patches of our first Tien Shan firs, to the wide valley of the Taushkan ("Hare") River. This stream, the main confluent of the Qum Ariq, which it joins close to Aqsu, breaks through from Semirechian territory, where it is known as the Kokshal. Its broad reaches and the snow-clad Tien Shan on its northern bank made a series of fine vistas for our delectation on the two marches to Uch Turfan. The soil of the valley is rich, and we passed through a series of picturesque villages, Somtash and Safarbai, Kok Oinak and Tusma, growing several kinds of root-crops, grain and lucerne, in the intervals between rocky ridges across which our undersized pack animals scrambled wearily.

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Uch Turfan which we reached on 11th September is a small town charmingly situated among groves of planes and tall

487 cypress-like poplars. A chain of curiously abrupt, craggy hills juts out from the black fantastically-fretted mountains of the Kelpin district, half-way across the broad valley. On an isolated spur of these, close to the town, is an old Chinese castle, still kept up and occupied by a small garrison ; for Uch Turfan is a frontier post of some strategic importance, commanding the high and difficult but much-used Bedal Pass
241 leading across the Tien Shan from Semirechia. The country round Uch Turfan is closely cultivated, the soil being, if possible,
361 even more fertile than that of the great oases of the south. Here there are no villages, nothing but countless farms standing on their own "small holdings," with fields well laid out between rows of tall poplars and many timber-trees shading the farms. From the summit of one of the abrupt hills mentioned above the view on a clear autumn day is superb. At one's feet, gardens and vineyards, melon-fields and tobacco-plantations ; in the middle distance, the town with its massive walls embowered in greenery, watched over by the old castle on its crag ; all around, miles and miles of fields and trees and farmsteads in rich mosaic, almost perfectly flat, with rocky hills like islands rising out of the sea of green and autumn gold ; in the background, from west right round to north-east, the Mountains of Heaven in full array, furrowed deep with glens and rising in the north to Pelion piled on Ossa of eternal snow ; to the south and south-west, the fantastic dark-brown and black peaks and crags of the Kelpin mountains, tier beyond tier, each a little hazier and more mysterious than the last.

300 I dined one day with the Amban and other officials in the gardens of Toqquz Bulak ("Nine Springs"), a Chinese pleasaunce famous throughout Sinkiang. The springs from which the place takes its name gush from the foot of one of the rocky hills near the town ; there are well-tended gardens round them and a square pond lined with willows, into the midst of which juts a wooden pier. Anchored at the end of the pier, surprisingly, is a houseboat of the regular Thames or Kashmir type, containing a room fitted up as a dining-room with a kitchen and pantry off it ; above, to complete the illusion, awnings and chairs and flowers in pots. One dines either in the houseboat or, if it is warm, in a summer-house on a ledge of the cliff above the pond. The Magistrate who entertained me, a Chinese Mussulman whom we were to meet again at a dramatic moment before we left Kashgar,[1] was a great horti-

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[1] See pp. 264–5.

culturist and his beds of dahlias and chrysanthemums were a 000 sight to behold; altogether, I found the gardens of Toqquz Bulak worthy of their reputation. One of the other guests, the 648 Tungling or Commandant of the infantry, was of a type quite new to me. Tall, stooping, cadaverous, with bushes of hair sticking out all over his face, he looked remarkably un-Chinese and odd in his Celestial costume. When he addressed me in perfect Turki I was still further puzzled, and at the first opportunity I asked him who he was. He told me that he was a "Wangzada[1]" or direct descendant of the native princes of Kucha, called in Chinese Wangs or "dukes." It was the Wangs of Kucha, he told me with obvious pride, who had been mainly instrumental in destroying the power of the Chinese in Southern Sinkiang in 1863-4 when the Tungans revolted in Kansu; Yakub Beg had come afterwards and had turned the Wangs out when they were weakened by their struggle with the Chinese. When the Celestials returned in 1876 and regained the province from Yakub Beg they took over the lands of the former ruling family, but granted them "political pensions" (as we should call them in India) in lieu of their lost dominions and offered them posts in the Army and Civil Service. Several of the younger Wangzadas, including my friend's father, accepted service under the Chinese Government, which entailed adoption of Chinese customs and dress as well as language; on his death many years ago his son had inherited the pension, 200 taels a month, and the command of a regiment of infantry. It was interesting to me, as a member of the Indian Political Department, to have an opportunity of comparing the methods of the Chinese and Indian Governments in their treatment of deposed native ruling families.

In spite of his curious appearance, "rather like a cross between a Skye terrier and one of the Minor Prophets" as I irreverently described him in a letter home, the Tungling was a well-bred and intelligent old gentleman, and I enjoyed my talk with him. I heard afterwards that he was held in great respect by the Turki population, who always called him "Khojam." The commandant of the Cavalry was a man of a 000 very different type. He was a Chinaman, but a bad specimen of his race, sensual and repulsive. He showed a certain *naiveté*, however, which caused me no little amusement. By mistake I failed to call on him at first, but rectified the omission after some broad hints. He surprised me in the middle of my call, *à propos* of something quite different, by asking me if I ate pork. I said I did sometimes, whereupon he proceeded to explain that he had some very good pork in his larder and would have liked to give a dinner-party in my honour, but could not have pork on the table if the other two officers were invited as one of them was a Chinese Mussulman and the other a Kucha Turki. As he could not offend the two latter by asking me without them, he thought he had better solve the problem by not having a dinner-party at all. Again, he explained that he would have sent round plenty of lucerne and grain for my horses, but he had heard that Ma Darin had already done so, and had therefore denied himself the pleasure.

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[1] *Zāda* is a Persian suffix meaning "born from," cf. *shahzāda* (pronounced *shahzda*) "prince."

It was at this time that I finally and reluctantly gave up a hope I had long entertained, of being able to make a dash across the Muzart Pass into the Ili district of Northern Sinkiang. The glory of Ili or Dzungaria is the Tekes Valley, considered by some to contain the finest Alpine scenery in all High Asia. This great valley—it is 200 miles long by 70 broad—is also a sportsman's paradise. Besides bears and leopards and such ordinary game, it is the haunt of the Asiatic wapiti, the biggest stag in the world; of *Ovis karelini*, a wild sheep practically indistinguishable from *Ovis poli* in size and shape of its mighty horns; and last but not least of the biggest ibex in the world.[1] Small wonder, then, that we longed to cast prudence to the winds and knock at the "windy gate of Dzungaria." It could not be. The Muzart Pass takes a week to cross and is 11,450 feet high, an elevation equivalent in the Central Tien Shan to about 16,000 feet in the Himalayas. Owing to its uncertain climate and heavy precipitation, it is only open from July to November; moreover, it is defended by at least one bad glacier, and there are several difficult places. To have only three weeks clear in Ili, I would have had to add at least a month and a half to my already long tour-programme. The Kashgar Vice-Consulate had just been "axed" on the departure of Harding in July, and I found myself unexpectedly single-handed, with no British officer—no Britisher at all, in fact—within a month's journey. Even if there had been sufficient official business to justify a tour in Ili, which there was not, I could not remain away for four months, nor cut myself off from headquarters by a distance entailing four weeks' hard travelling. 002

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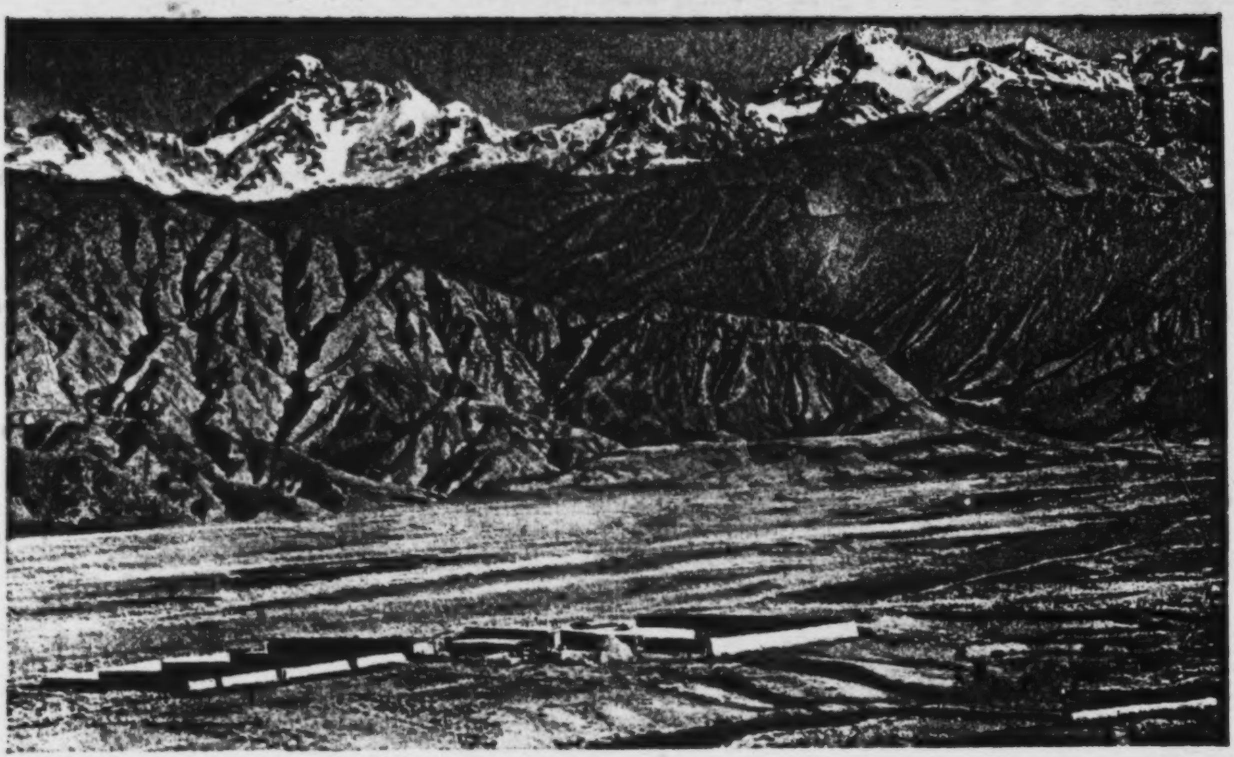
[1] In 1925 Mr. Kermit Roosevelt picked up in the Tien Shan an ibex head measuring, I believe, 67 inches.

To console ourselves for the abandonment of the Ili trip, we decided when I had finished my work at Uch Turfan to pay a visit to one of the steeply-pitched valleys of the Tien Shan to the north of the town. The Yangi Art Jilgha, in or near which we spent a week, had been explored by Merzbacher in 1903, but not, so far as I knew, visited since. It proved shorter and narrower and its fir-woods smaller than I had been led to expect, but the scenery was wild and grand, with ice-clad peaks towering to heights of 17,000 and 18,000 feet all round. We were surprised to find a Chinese military post consisting of the usual N.C.O. and seven or eight opium-sodden *chiriks* (soldiers) at the mouth of the main gorge. It appeared that the pass at the head of the valley, though very difficult and seldom free from ice, was used by opium-smugglers as an alternative to the Bedal Pass further to the west. The opium of "Karakol" (the native name for the Przhevalsk district of south-eastern Semirechia) though inferior to the fine product of Afghanistan, fetches a good price in Aqsu, where the Chinese authorities are no more successful in preventing its sale than they are in Yarkand. I may mention here that neither the Amban nor anyone else in Uch Turfan believed for a moment that I had gone up the Yangi Art to shoot ibex. It was the thinnest story they had heard for a long time. There were two theories as to the object of our trip. One was that I was nosing out opium scandals with a view to reporting the goings-on of Chinese frontier officials to the League of Nations. The other was that I had arranged a meeting on the top of the pass with the commander of Bolshevik forces in "Karakol," with a view to a joint Russo-British invasion of Chinese Turkistan! The bazaar held the latter theory, but the Chinese official world evidently inclined to the former, as we soon found out. The night we arrived at the Yangi Art post the N.C.O. in command brought me a letter he had received by the hand of the yamen runner who accompanied us; it was in Turki, which nobody at the post could read any more than they could their own language, so they appealed to us for help. The gist of the order was that the "foreign consul" and his party had gone up into the mountains to catch opium-runners, and that he, the commandant, must watch their every movement and on no account allow any smugglers to fall into their hands! I had little difficulty in persuading the poor N.C.O. that he need not "shadow" me, promising him I would report to his superior officer that he had done his duty faithfully, after which the detachment not only gave us no trouble but helped us to the best of their ability.

It was delightful finding ourselves among fir-woods and glaciers and alpine meadows once more, and we thoroughly enjoyed the few days we spent up the valley. D. baked scones and puff pastry on the grassy banks of ice-cold torrents, doctored the few inhabitants and, twenty-bore in hand, chased the elusive hill-partridge up minor precipices in charge of Sangi Khan. As for me, I spent breathless hours after ibex on dizzy crags four or five thousand feet above our camp, accompanied only by a capable young Kirghiz shikari I had picked up, the image of a sturdy Scottish laddie of his class. Three days we spent finding the herd, and then I had only one day in which to get my shot, for I had to limit myself strictly as regards time. It was grand sport, that last day, though it ended sadly. By ten o'clock we were 12,000 feet up, and within a mile or so of the Russian frontier, hot on the tracks of the herd. Then suddenly, on rounding a difficult corner on which concealment was impossible, we saw them—and they us. Off they went up the cliffs, and a minute later they were in sanctuary far above our heads. The rest of the day, except for a chilly hour for lunch, we spent traversing the mountain-face, mostly pitched at an angle of 60°, with a view to approaching by a wide détour the evening feeding-grounds of the ibex. They did not come down till nearly sunset, and it was past six before I got my one chance. Seven fine bucks with heads measuring perhaps 45–50 inches—not to be compared with the monsters of the Tekes Valley or the Altai, but bigger than anything I had got before. Within thirty yards of them I crawled on a horrible ledge—and then my rifle missed fire. Twice it clicked sluggishly, then unexpectedly went off; I, of course, in my agitation missed. There was no time for another shot—within a fraction of a second the herd were over the edge of the eyrie on which they had been browsing. Scrambling forward I just caught sight of them bounding thirty yards in their stride down the breakneck couloir far below. Afterwards a friend of mine, a mighty hunter, explained to me how it had happened. "Did you clean the oil off your bolt before the shoot?" he asked. "No? You *were* a mutt. You ought to have known better.

[Face p. 226]



SHEEP-FARM OF YETIM DÖBE, CENTRAL TIEN SHAN

000 Sunset in September 12,000 feet up—must have been freezing hard. Of course the oil froze and clogged your bolt. Wonder the rifle went off at all."

563 We were surprised to find a family of "Sarts" or ordinary
Turkis sharing this small valley* with the Kirghiz. Coming
233 down from the ibex-ground one day I overtook them trekking down from their summer grazings, a pretty sight. On the opposite side of the stream a lean-visaged Sart shepherded a couple of hundred sheep and goats up an almost perpendicular cliff and along narrow ledges literally overhanging the torrent; this was necessary because the current was too strong for short-legged muttons to cross. Behind, a quaint procession came filing down the track and splashed across the stream; half a dozen mares with their foals, a man and two boys perched on masses of bedding on top of ponies, a neat smiling Sart woman with her baby and another man leading a camel piled high with the framework and felts of the family mansion.

484 Descending to the plains once more, we camped two glorious days on wide meadows near the long yellow loess bluffs of the Taushkan River. A hundred and fifty miles of the snowy Mountains of Heaven sparkled in the sky to west and north and north-east of us. It was advisable to give the baggage ponies (we had hired new ones at Uch Turfan) and our own animals a day or two in clover before the next lap of our journey; for we were to march 164 miles across the southern face of the Central Tien Shan and down the lower Muzart Valley to Bai on the Kucha road.

000 We were sorry to leave the Uch Turfan neighbourhood and the lovely valley of the "Hare River." We found the people delightful and quite unspoilt, especially the women. The latter, poor dears, seemed to be even more at a discount than at Kashgar; not one in five appeared to have a husband to herself, and they complained bitterly to D. of their hard lot. They came in streams to our camp among the meadows to "salaam" D. and beg medicines for blind, crippled, tuberculous and otherwise incurable relations. And not one of them came empty-handed. All tried to pay D. for her medicine or advice in peaches, eggs, melons, cream, corn-cobs or some such agricultural product. And when she not only made them take back most of their "widow's mites" but distributed (as she always did wherever we went) little presents of buttons, imitation jewellery, safety-pins, pieces of muslin, beads and

*[The Yangi Art Jilgha -- Analyst]

000 the like, their astonishment and gratitude were pathetic. As one of them exclaimed to D. on receipt of some buttons worth about an eighth of a penny " There's never been anyone like you this way before ! "

487 On 28th September we struck camp once more and marched 35 miles over alternate oasis and desert to the right bank of the Qum Ariq River. Here we found ourselves in some of the most fertile country I have ever seen ; it was the Beg of Taghak near by who, when I asked him whether I could get any maize, replied—" In this country, Sahib, you can get any thing you like except chicken's milk." Meanwhile the hateful dust-haze of the Tarim Basin had closed down once more and swallowed everything up. Though we crossed the Qum Ariq River close to the mouth of the tremendous unexplored gorge by which it cuts its way through the Central Tien Shan, we could not see it nor the Savaktai and other magnificent peaks to the north. Knowing however, that in October the haze would not last long, we possessed our souls in patience. Following a route roughly parallel to that taken by Stein in 1908 we pitched our tents at a wild spot called Ileklik on the Pakalik stream, about 25 miles north of Aqsu. Here and at Chigan Kotan, 5 miles to the north-east, I spent three or four days trying without success to get a shot at one of the wild sheep, smaller than *Ovis karelini* and apparently a separate variety, which inhabit the barren plateaux north of Aqsu. All this time the haze persisted. Then, on the very day we started on the last four marches to Bai, it cleared up and the magnificent snows of the Central Tien Shan revealed themselves in all their glory.

What interested me most, apart from immense unmapped peaks and the vision of at least one glacier comparable in size with those of the Karakoram, was the belt of fir-forest which stretched along the whole length of the range at a height of about 8,000 feet. I could see that there was a zone of Alpine country several miles deep between the arid foothills and grassy uplands we were traversing and the snow-line of the main range. I noticed that the fir-forest never grew on the south side of the ridges, each of which showed merely a line of trees along its crest where the forest clothing its north slope ended abruptly.

It was tantalizing to see this wonderful country and not be able to explore it. If we had known sooner what it was like, it might have been possible to do something. But it was

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late in the season and snow lay over all the alpine zone; moreover, the Begs of Pakalik and Tarlak, mountain villages to the north of us inhabited not by Kirghiz but by "Sarts," were not helpful. They evidently did not want us in their country and took as little trouble on our behalf as they could. I find a bitter entry in my diary on the subject, which I quote for the benefit of future travellers in this region.

"Here, the one object of the Begs is to save themselves the trouble of finding you supplies and guides, even though you pay liberally for everything. They will tell you any lie and subject you to any inconvenience or disappointment to save themselves a little trouble. In this country, never listen to what the Beg says about the best place to camp at—always choose your own place, and camp where convenient to *you*. If they want you to go on "just another potai," beyond a pleasant camping-ground, late in the evening, *don't*. If you are shooting and have found game, and they want you to move somewhere else where there is more game, *don't*. The only people you can at all rely on in this country are the Kirghiz, and even they are not as trustworthy as those of the Qaratash Valley."

The Beg of Pakalik finally distinguished himself by not only failing to find us a guide but himself deserting us some miles east of Chigan Kotan. There was not a sign of human life as far as the eye could reach in any direction, and we had to steer by the sun and such landmarks as I could identify in Stein's map. In the afternoon we struck the Terang stream for which I had been making, but there was not a habitation to be seen, nor any grass. We were just making up our minds to a desert camp without food for man or beast, when some one caught sight of a solitary man on a camel in the far distance, riding southwards. By great good luck he turned out to be a camel-herd in the employ of an old Andijani merchant of Aqsu called Abdus Sattar Haji, of whom I had heard as a well-wisher of the Consulate. The boy said that the nearest habitation was his master's place at Yetim Dōbe up among the mountains to the north, and there he brought us safely after another seven hours' steady marching. We should certainly never have found the way without a guide; for about five miles the path wound and twisted in a labyrinth of steep-sided red clay hills and then crossed a stiff little pass called the Jigda Bulak Dawan. I had a careful watch kept on the lad the whole way, for he was as lazy as every one else in that country and did not

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

487 want to guide us, though I gave him money and promised him more. Once I thought he had given us the slip among the gorges of the red hills, but we found him again. It was half past eight and pitch dark before our ears were at last greeted by the welcome sound of dogs barking, and a few minutes later we were warming ourselves at a roaring coal fire in a cosy room at the Haji's farm. The old man himself was not there, but his sons welcomed us most kindly and feasted our men royally on mutton and maize bread.

Next morning the air was clearer than ever, and we realized how attractive was the country into which we had stumbled blindly, as it were, the night before. The ranch—for the place corresponded somewhat to my idea of a South American *estancia*—lay in the midst of an immense sweep of grassy upland, above which to the north rose snow-clad ridges fringed with firs. That day's march, from Yetim Dōbe to Qizil Bulak near the foot of the Muzart Pass, was one of the most enjoyable I have ever performed. Our guide, one of the 137 Haji's sons, led us over one little pass after another, in and out of charming green valleys, some inhabited, others not, some clothed only with wild rose and barberry, others dotted with clumps of trees resplendent in gorgeous autumn tints, orange, russet, gold and scarlet. We lunched contentedly off cold partridge sandwiches and cake under a clump of desert poplars in the middle of a hay-field perched up on a hill-side opposite the snows; a picturesque Sart woman gathered wisps of mown hay near by and loaded them on a quaint wheel-less bullock-cart. She was not in the least shy, and exchanged 136 remarks with us the while. On this and the following day we enjoyed such sport after small game as I had never known before. I was accustomed in the mountains to the south of Kashgar to getting as many red-legged partridge on the march as I liked, with a few sand-grouse, pigeons and perhaps a duck or two thrown in; but never had I found myself in such a small-game shooter's paradise as the southern valleys of the Central Tien Shan. Without straying a hundred yards from the road I shot (1) red-legged partridge, (2) *sisi*, a kind of very small and succulent partridge common in Baluchistan and Persia, but not seen by us elsewhere in Chinese Turkistan, (3) sand-grouse, (4) teal, (5) hares, (6) blue pigeons, besides which I missed an easy chance at a pair of those fine birds (7) imperial sandgrouse. I may mention here that on this tour altogether we came across no less than fourteen different

kinds of small game, and that without going off the road. /136
Besides the seven enumerated above, we saw, either in the mountains or in the jungles of the Tarim River valley, the following: (8) Shaw's pheasant, (9) duck, including mallard pintail, gadwall, golden-eye, and red-crested pochard, (10) snipe, (11) woodcock, (12) geese, (13) plover, (14) Tibetan snow-cock. Of these I shot specimens of all except woodcock and Tibetan snow-cock. The former we saw at Maralbashi flying through a garden; the latter I came across in large numbers at 11,000–12,000 feet while stalking ibex up the Yangi Art Jilgha.

Of many pictures that live in our memory of that delightful 487
march, perhaps the most vivid is of the shrine of Qara-sakal Atam, "My Father Blackbeard." It is situated in the loveliest little glen imaginable. A limpid stream plashes down through open meadows from the fir-clad ridges of the Central Tien Shan, until it joins the main valley through a narrow neck between two backbones of reddish rock. Just above this neck is a coppice of fine old mountain ashes and desert poplars enclosing a glade of smooth turf and a bubbling spring. Barberry bushes, now a mass of carmine berries, and the brilliant orange-yellow of the trees in their autumn finery blend perfectly with the rich russets and ochres of the surrounding rocks; looking northwards, the grassy steppe sweeps
right up to the distant forest above which again tower the snow- [778]
clad Mountains of Heaven. Father Blackbeard's shrine is only a bunch of sticks, festooned with votive rags and embellished with the horns of wild sheep; but whoever he was and whenever he lived, he is marked as having been a saint of taste—for did he not choose the most beautiful spot in all the Tien Shan to be his hermitage?

Two long but easy marches down the open and partially-cultivated valley of the Muzart River brought us to the small town of Bai on the Aqsu-Kucha road. Here we found the Mir Munshi awaiting us; he had come out from Kashgar to help me with my work at Bai and Aqsu. We stayed four days at the roomy Chinese rest-house at Bai, most of which I spent
interviewing various British subjects from Kucha, three /62
marches further on. The town, which is the headquarters of a third-class Magistrate, is an undistinguished Sleepy Hollow of a place, populated by Turkis and Chinese Muhammadan
Tungans in the proportion of about three to one. It was 00-Ɛ
our first experience of the latter race *en masse*, and we were

000 not favourably impressed. For Asiatics—I do not judge them by our lower Western standards—most of the Tungans we saw were remarkably bad-mannered. Whenever either of us tried to buy anything in the bazaars, either at Bai or at the New City of Aqsu, great louts of Tungans would stand round and exchange what were obviously comments on our appearance and behaviour, bursting every now and again into loud guffaws. We were not very sorry to leave Bai, though we greatly regretted that time did not permit of a visit to the far more interesting and important town of Kucha.

487 The 107 miles *viâ* Abad to Aqsu Old City occupied five days. Our first halt was at the flourishing village of Yaka Ariq on the right bank of the Muzart River. The main road for the next 50 miles lies almost entirely over barren and uninteresting country, so we left it and made due westwards for the curious red hills of Abad, among which I had hopes of another chance at the wild sheep. Camping for the night at Ilkache, the last oasis of the Muzart Valley cultivation, I rose before dawn and spent a long morning scouring the hills, but saw only several herds of antelope. Meanwhile D. and the caravan struck camp at a more reasonable hour and marched to a low pass among the hills appropriately named the Topa Dawan or
622 "Dusty Pass," where I met them at midday. It was here
224 that we made a new and most picturesque acquaintance, the Kirghiz headman of Qara Bulaq, Hushur Beg. As I approached the "Dusty Pass" I saw the solitary figure of a man on a horse standing on the crest of a ridge. This proved on closer inspection to be a youngish Kirghiz with a high-cheek-boned, weather-beaten face, mounted on a shaggy little Kalmuck pony. On his right wrist, which was protected by a large white fleece gauntlet and supported on the saddle by a wooden prop, he carried a magnificent hooded *qara qush* or black hunting-eagle. This bird, I afterwards found, measured three feet from beak to tail and over seven feet from wing-tip to wing-tip; it was a dull black in colour, with a ruff of rust-coloured feathers, yellow claws, black beak with yellow base and fine red-brown eyes. From the near side of Hushur Beg's saddle dangled an object which puzzled me at first; it proved to be the lure with which he attracted the bird back from wandering, and consisted of a large ball made of skin from the heads of antelopes. The Beg turned out to be a thoroughly good type of man and a real sportsman, very different from the lazy and untrustworthy "Taghliks" of Pakalik and Tarlak.

A KIRGHIZ BEG OF THE TIEN SHAN, WITH HIS HUNTING EAGLE ~~[p. 232~~

[Face p. 232]

622 He was passionately fond of hawking and "eagling," if one may coin the word ; he used hawks for hares and other small 224 game, eagles for antelopes and sometimes wolves. He told me he would not part with his favourite *qara qush* for a hundred taels, though it was very fierce and had more than once clawed him when hungry and rashly unhooded. I noticed that he held the string attached to its hood in his teeth, and that after unhooding it for a moment so that I could take a photograph of the two of them, he put the hood on again at once with his bridle hand. He pointed out to me the precipitous red sandstone cliffs above Abad where it had been netted as a fledgeling.

He also told me about his hawks, among which he prized most a white one from the Altai. All over Central Asia these white hawks,[1] which are exceedingly difficult to get, are highly prized, though their performances are not, I believe, in any way superior to those of ordinary falcons. They are occasionally brought from Ili to the Aqsu market, where they fetch from fifty to a hundred taels or more. Almost every year the Mehtar (Chief) of Chitral, the Mir of Nagar or some such potentate from the Indian frontier sends men up to Kashgar to try and buy a white hawk ; as often as not the messenger returns empty-handed.

361 Three days later we marched through the narrow and dirty but picturesque wood-and-mud-brick bazaars of Old Aqsu to the charming house and garden outside the western gate 000 which had been placed at our disposal. We were pleased to find that our host was the same Haji whose ranch at Yetim Döbe had been such a haven of refuge to us in the Tien Shan. Buried in trees, just far enough from the town to escape its noise and dust, the country house of Abdus Sattar Haji was a pleasant place indeed. A couple of hundred yards to the north ran the long line of perpendicular loess cliffs, forty or fifty feet high, which bound the city of Aqsu on the north and east and evidently mark an ancient channel of the Qum Ariq River. Under the level rays of the setting sun the place gave the impression of a marvellous piece of theatrical scene-painting ; the tall white stems of the poplars and the rainbow-tinted autumn foliage blended perfectly with the warm grey-brown tones of the " drop-scene " of cliff in the background, and with the entirely mediæval walls and massive gates and bastions of the town.

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[1] *Hierofalco altaiensis,* Turki *toighun.*

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

133 But the most curious feature of Old Aqsu appeared next day, when I found my way up one of the winding gullies of the loess bluffs. It is the extraordinary contrast between the two levels, between the land rendered fertile by irrigation from the Qum-Ariq below and the *sai* or gravel desert above. Below, as far as the eye can reach, stretches a rich, heavily-timbered champaign dotted with farms and seamed with irrigation-channels; five minutes' climb up one of the many clefts in the bluff, and you come out on to an absolutely empty desert. Except on those few days when the strangely-corrugated foot-hills and possibly the soaring ice-fields and glaciers of the Tien Shan appear like a vision in the north, half the circle of the horizon is a complete blank, without a bush or a mound to break its perfect smoothness. It is hard to believe that a few minutes ago you were in the midst of a landscape worthy of the brush of Constable or Corot. Some years ago an ambitious Amban sought to gain promotion by bringing a large area of this *sai* under cultivation to the south-east of the Old City. He spent 60,000 taels and much forced labour on deep canals and reservoirs and the construction of a small town of buildings connected with the new water-works. Everything was done with the utmost thoroughness and the scheme was most successful, except that the water would not flow along the canals, which had therefore to be abandoned. To this day the remains of the buildings and waterworks line the road to New Aqsu, clogged with drifts of fine loess dust and dwarfed to insignificance by the immense sweep of the desert behind them.

764 In Mussulman countries the dead are not as a rule buried in earth that might support the living, and here[1] too the uncultivable (because unirrigable) cliff-tops above the town are covered with domed tombs in seemingly countless myriads. A City of the Dead, in fact, with streets, squares and boulevards complete, overlooks the City of the Living as a perpetual *memento mori*. Looking up from the streets of the town, the domes of the cemeteries crown the bluffs at every point save one; only at the north-west end of the town the ruins of "Amir" Yakub Beg Bedaulat's fortress on one cliff and of his hospital on another, break the serried ranks of the 600 tombs. Bedaulat, knowing no doubt that his day would not last for ever, built his citadel of unbaked brick, and little is left of it though it was abandoned but fifty years ago. The place used to be easily accessible to sight-seers, but the only

[1] [in old Aqsu--Analyst]

two paths which led to the top were blocked up some time ago by the Chinese. It is still possible, however, to gain the citadel, if you know how. On the town side a wave of mud-and-wattle houses surges up to within twelve or fifteen feet of the top of the bluff, and by trespassing on the owners and obtaining permission to use their roofs, it is possible to scramble from one rickety hut-roof to another and so reach the foot of a steep flight of steps cut in the clay. The " Garden of Bedaulat " is a table about fifty acres in extent almost entirely covered with the remains of mud-brick buildings and enclosures. The highest ground is occupied by the erstwhile " Amir's " palace ; below it is a flat rectangular area which contained the court-houses, treasury and other official buildings, and the gardens. It is pathetic to trace faintly the lines of the flower-beds and lawns, and of the water-channels which fed them, now but a dead-white, clayey " blanc of Nature's works expung'd and ras'd."

From the bastion above what used to be the lock-up in the west corner of the fortress one looks across a little valley filled with trees and houses to the Golden Shrine, a lovely blue-tiled *mazar* standing among tombs and trees on another " table-mountain " of loess. Beyond it again a further promontory of cliff carries the picturesque Hospital of Bedaulat, which is in better repair than his other buildings because the Chinese still used it as an ordnance store for a time ; my efforts to visit this place, whence the best view of all Aqsu is to be had, were of no avail.

Of all our glimpses of the varied life of Old Aqsu, Chinese and Turki, native and foreign, perhaps the funniest was a visit which D. paid to the home of an ancient Hindu *bunnia* (trader and money-lender) from Shikarpur in Sind who had lived in Old Aqsu for many years. His joy and pride at the arrival of his *mai-bap* (mother and father, i.e. ourselves) were intense and he constituted himself D.'s guide round the bazaars. In the course of their perambulations he took D. to his own home, a single small room in a *serai* where he lived with his portly Turki wife. The old lady evidently had not expected so distinguished a visitor, for she was in *déshabille*, engaged in cooking her lord's dinner. Portions of strange foods were hurled into a corner and D. was seated on a rug with a cup of tepid tea ; then, making her lean old husband squat on the floor between herself and D., Mrs. Bunnia without further ado took off her kitchen clothes behind this very insufficient screen

000 and emerged later with her portly form arrayed in a new white muslin dress and a green striped jacket. D. had as much difficulty in not witnessing her hostess' toilet as she had in keeping a straight face while making polite conversation to her host.

The fertility of the soil and the cheapness of living in Aqsu
435 district are amazing. Agricultural labour costs 2½*d. per diem*, and the price of land is on an average less than a quarter of that at Kashgar. A *jing* (20 lbs.) of maize costs 4*d.*–5*d.*,
244 wheat 6*d.* and rice 7*d.* Fruit and vegetables are as plentiful and cheap as the cereals. The grapes we had were the finest I have ever tasted; the two best kinds were an enormous "lady's finger" and a smaller seedless grape with a rose-red flush on it, sweet and strongly-flavoured. The former, which sold at 2½*d.* for a bunch weighing 1½ lbs., were so big that I took one at random from a bunch and measured it; its circumference lengthways was four inches, round the "waist" two and a third. In a field close to Abdus Sattar Haji's house I was astonished to find one day about half an acre of ground literally carpeted with fine melons; on inquiry I was told that there were 15,000 there, and that they were the larger part—not the whole—of the crop raised by a cultivating lessee of some of the Haji's land. The man told me afterwards that he had paid 100 taels (£13 6*s.* 8*d.*) rent for the land and water and had spent 80 taels (£10 13*s.* 4*d.*) on seed, labour, etc. He had already sold 5,000 in the Aqsu bazaar, and expected to retail the whole 20,000 at an average price which worked out at slightly less than a penny apiece, netting approximately 360 taels or 200 per cent. on his outlay! It must be confessed, however, that we found the Aqsu melons inferior to those of Kashgar, though succulent enough according to our English ideas. They had nothing at Aqsu to compare with the ambrosial "Beshak Shirin" of Kashgar.

000 The garden near the New City to which we moved on 23rd October belonged to the Russian Aqsaqal, another Andijani merchant; it contained an even finer show of fruit and flowers than Abdus Sattar Haji's. There were two immense pergolas measuring together about a hundred yards under which one strolled and munched the above-mentioned rose-pink seedless grapes almost without the trouble of putting one's hand up. The Tao Tai of Aqsu Circle[1] and other officials

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[1] This includes Uch Turfan, Bai, Kucha, Shahyar, Bugur and other districts of the lower Tarim River valley with its tributaries, but not Maralbashi, which is in the Kashgar Taoyinship.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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THE CITY OF THE DEAD, OLD AQSU

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AN AQSU SMALL-HOLDER'S MELON-CROP; 15,000 MELONS READY FOR MARKET

[Face p. 236]

000 were most friendly and hospitable, so that we felt quite at home in the so-called New City, which looked as if it dated at least from T'ang times. The bazaars were not as picturesque and interesting as those of the Turki town and were too full of Tungans to be pleasant, but the environs of the New City and the shady banks of the winding Qum Ariq were a continual delight.

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A favourite haunt was the Chinese (Taoist) temple of the God of the White Cloud. It is not an old place, but its shady grove and quiet courtyards are wonderfully pleasant and peaceful. It was founded by a bygone Commandant of the Aqsu garrison and was repaired, improved and endowed a generation ago by a devout Tao Tai called Peng. The God of the White Cloud communicates with his followers, or did so until recently, by means of divine writing, which curiously enough used to be done by a sort of planchette. I was shown this by the friendly custodian of the shrine. It consists of a wooden board with one leg only, the place of the second and third legs of the planchette being taken by handles which are held on each side by the mediums. There is also a large square wooden tray on which is sprinkled the sacred sand in which the planchette writes, and big high-backed uncomfortable-looking chairs on which the God and his divine associates sit, invisible, at the séances. Facsimiles of the God's writings hang on the walls ; it was pointed out to me that the strength of many strokes was more than mortal, and certainly the piety of the sentiments translated to me from them was unexceptionable. It is a most unfortunate coincidence that since the departure twelve years ago of the two Tientsin merchants who acted as mediums, the God has vouchsafed no calligraphic messages to his flock. It would appear, indeed, as if he had no flock nowadays, for no worshipper seems ever to visit the temple except on the official holy days, when by order of the Governor the Taoyin and other officials attend service ; only the old priest potters about, dusting a joss-stick tray here and a painted-cloth lamp there, clanging the temple bell and beating the great drum at the appointed times and occasionally, with loving reverence, changing the written prayers in the frames which stand before the god. The courtyards are grass-grown, but clean ; the little square garden behind the temple is a tangle of vines and thick undergrowth of poplar, but the two picturesque wooden pavilions it conceals are in good repair and the shrines in them are care-

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fully tended; the "guest-room" off the middle courtyard is crudely decorated with aniline-dyed embroideries and rugs, but it is always kept ready for the mighty Visitor who never comes.

Though it is unfrequented, though it represents a dead faith, the shrine of the God of the White Cloud at Aqsu is an abode of peace and reverence, very different from the filthy, tawdry travesty of a temple which is all that Kashgar can boast.

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Our farewell to Aqsu was perhaps the most trying and, in retrospect, comic of all our "public" departures from Central Asian towns. By way of acknowledgment of the hospitality we had received, I somewhat rashly presented the Tao Tai with a fine Wiltshire ham which had lately arrived from England. This put the coping-stone on our popularity, and word went round among the officials that we were to be "seen off" in proper Chinese style. Seeing a person off in China apparently means turning up to tea on the morning of his departure and delaying his start as long as you can. Next morning at 9.30, just as I was superintending the loading of our ten new baggage-ponies, a yamen runner arrived with the news that his master the Amban was coming to call. In vain my protests—two minutes later enter the Amban with the usual herd of Begs, interpreters, policemen and hangers-on of all kinds. D. leapt out of the back window just in time, with instructions from me to see the rest of the ponies loaded and escape when she could; I said I would follow as quickly as possible. Tea and cakes were produced from somewhere (by the gardener, I think), and I sat down to an hour's chat with the Amban. Half an hour later the ponies were all loaded and D. was just pushing them off down the narrow lane which led to the main road; suddenly, more cries and clatterings, a fanfare of bugles and the Tao Tai with a following twice as big as the Amban's came charging up the lane. A stampede ensued; half the loads came off, the ponies mixed themselves up in each other's ropes and the courtyard became pandemonium let loose. Smiling blandly, the Tao Tai passed through it unscathed in the midst of his henchmen and added himself to my tea-party within. It took D. and the servants another half-hour to restore order and refix the loads; then off they started down the lane once more. As they did so, another Chinese cart swung into it at the other end, followed by a troop of cavalry at a smart amble ; it was the Commandant of the Garrison, also coming to see me off. The carriers tried to turn the ponies back, but D.'s patience had long been exhausted and she would have none of it ; urged by her cries the ponies and our mounted servants charged down the lane and after a short tussle bore back the Commandant's carriage, escort and all, out into the dusty high-road. Fortunately the gallant officer was too much under the influence of opium to be quite aware of what was happening ; fortunately also, no other dignitaries came to see me off and I escaped an hour later after the most cordial adieux.

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D. had quite recovered her equanimity when I caught her up after a sharp ten miles' canter. She had been lucky enough to witness a most picturesque spectacle on the road. A caravan of some two hundred camels carrying raw wool from Kucha to Kashgar happened to leave Aqsu the same morning as ourselves and to be crossing the Qum Ariq River just as D. overtook it. The huge, shaggy animals with their bulky loads were tied in strings of eight, each string as usual led by a man on a donkey [1] and the whole caravan chiming with a regular carillon of bells. At the ford the Qum Ariq runs in four broad channels of varying depth ; it was as good as a play, D. said, to watch the strings of camels, each guided by a yelling carrier perched on the top of the leading animal's load, zigzagging painfully across one channel after another. The donkeys, cool and sensible as ever (nobody who has travelled in the Lands of the Sun makes the mistake of thinking the donkey a stupid animal) swam across by themselves without fuss, while the big fierce-looking Kalmuck watch-dogs barked furiously as they splashed around. To complete the picture, three big Chinese travelling carts coming from Maralbashi with a minor official and his household on board met the camels in mid-stream and made confusion worse confounded. I had a talk with the carriers later in the day. They told me that the wool belonged to Kucha sheep-farmers ; the camels came from the Bai district, and had been hired at the rate of 8 taels (*21s. 4d.*) each ; fifty days had been allowed them under the terms of their contract for the whole journey,

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[1] Mongolian and "Bactrian" camels travel more steadily if they are led by a pony or donkey ; the latter animal is more commonly used for the purpose as its pace is practically the same as a camel's. I did not notice this custom in South Persia, where the single-humped Arabian camel is used.

492 ~~484~~ and they expected to reach Kashgar within a month from Aqsu.

For 112 miles after leaving Aqsu we traversed the perfectly 487 flat plain to the north of the Tarim River jungles, within sight of, though not actually along, the famous "Silk Road" first organized by the Han Emperor Wu-ti in the second century B.C., for the transport of Chinese fabrics to the Far West.[1] At an average interval of 15 miles there are halting places with poky little native serais and sometimes a slightly better Chinese rest-house. Each place has a small bazaar of shanties and stalls in which the people of the settlement, or of the nearest oasis, sell food for man and beast. At Chilan, 57 miles from Aqsu, we found ourselves in Kelpin district again; we noticed here a remarkable improvement in the facial type of the people, the women being remarkably handsome with regular, almost Greek, features.

ooo The two Chinese troopers deputed by the O.C. Aqsu to escort our caravan as far as Maralbashi caused us much innocent amusement. One of them was comparatively bright and helpful; indeed, except for the fact that he could not fire his carbine, the bolt of which was tied on with a red handkerchief, and that he never mounted his horse without the assistance of a wall at least three feet high, he was quite a useful cavalryman. He had obviously never heard a shot fired in anger; whenever I shot a bird in his presence, or even fired my gun, he became wildly excited, laughing and clapping his hands like a child. But he was at any rate alive; his brother in arms, on the other hand, was the most miserable, opium-sodden wretch I ever saw, even in the Titai's army. We stood him as long as we could, for the sake of the O.C. Aqsu's "face," but the limit was reached the night we came to Yaka Kuduk. The march from Chilan was a moderately long one, and D. and I cantered ahead in the afternoon so as to arrive before dark, expecting the caravan to come in about seven o'clock. To our discomfort, it did not arrive till half-past eight. We questioned Hafiz. "Sahib," he replied, with an apologetic grin, "it was the opium-smoking *chirik*. Last night he finished all the opium he brought with him, and this afternoon he asked us for some. We had none, and he became very angry. Just after sunset he fell off his horse, and we

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[1] The Chinese military road ran along the foot of the Kelpin Tagh a few miles to the north-west of the present route (Stein, "Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. II, p. 427).

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

had to pick him up and put him back on it. After a time 0-00
he fell off again, and his horse became frightened and kicked
off its saddle and upset the baggage-ponies, and they stampeded
all over the jungle and many loads came off. It took us a
long time to get the caravan started again. As the *chirik*
could not sit on his own horse I brought him in across my
saddle-bow."

At the next stage, Chadar Kul, we found ourselves among 563
Dulanis, the same cheerful, dirty, good-looking, quarrelsome,
disreputable, singularly attractive race whose acquaintance
we had made in the spring at Merket. Once more we chafed
under the attentions of hordes of male sightseers, once more
we marvelled at the beauty of cherubic but incredibly dirty
children. Just outside the village we passed two large parties [525]
of gamblers, almost all men, dicing under the trees; in the
bazaar their wives were minding the shops and doing what
little work is done in a Dulani village. The Tarim river 136
jungles, which here began in earnest, held great numbers
of "Shaw's pheasant," magnificent birds with plumage of
flame-colour shot with purple and tail-feathers barred with
black. The sport, indeed, in this neighbourhood was almost
too good; besides the woods full of pheasants, the ponds and
marsh-lakes swarmed with duck and teal, which had evidently
just arrived on their way south. At one place the wild duck
actually came and sat on the village pond, eighty yards from
the back of the rest-house in which we lodged.

At Tumshuk, forty miles east of Maralbashi, we left the 487
main road and struck southwards for about twenty miles to
a lonely shepherd's cottage on the south bank of the Tarim,
where we spent four most pleasant and restful days encamped
in a little grove of desert poplars among the melon-beds.
Pheasants, duck, teal and other game abounded, while the
brushwood-covered flats were a perfect Zoo for wild life of
all kinds.

It was a charming place in the bright autumn weather; 000
the blue river wound close by; to the south rose abruptly
from the plain another of the curious ranges of hills which
are peculiar to the neighbourhood; within a mile or so lay
two beautiful fresh-water lakes, one of them ten miles long and
two broad, reflecting in their glassy waters here the crags of
the Choka Tagh, there the mighty dunes of the Takla Makan.
For we were on the very verge of the great desert; it was
beyond those very dunes that Sven Hedin lost all his camels

000 and all but one of his men from thirst, and was with within an ace of perishing himself.

I was interested in the shepherds who lived at the cottage. There were three brothers with their families, the men being in the employ of one of the Maralbashi Begs, Abid Beg. For herding and shearing their master's sheep they received one fleece in ten; out of this wool they made ropes and sacking which they bartered at Maralbashi for flour and cloth. They also trapped foxes and netted fish, which in this river are large and quite good eating. Finally, they grew melons, of which they sold more than they ate. The soil, being salt, was good for melons but for no other crop. The three brothers had at first formed a joint family, but had afterwards ceased to do so owing to quarrels. They continued to live together at the farm, but whereas formerly they had owned three cocks in common, now each family owned one cock, and so on.

487 Recrossing the Tarim on 7th November we marched to Maralbashi, camping on the way at the foot of the highest and boldest of the miniature mountain-ranges of the district, the Mazar Tagh. Outside the town we were received most kindly by our friend the Russian-speaking Amban whom we had met at Merket, Chiu Da-heng. We stayed in the garden of the British Aqsaqal, a venerable Chitrali merchant; here pheasants came to feed every morning and woodcock flitted among the trees, for the charm of Maralbashi is in the proximity of the Tarim jungle, the wild life of which hems it in on all sides. Near by the dying Kashgar River flowed sluggishly, its waters destined to be spent in cultivation ere ever they could join the Tarim. On its bank stood a charming little tiled and whitewashed mausoleum built by our host in memory of his father.

136 We were guests at the Yamen more than once, and there had an opportunity of studying at close quarters some fine specimens Mr. Chiu kept of the peculiar swamp deer of the country. The stag we saw was distinctly larger than the average Scottish red deer and its horns were longer, smoother and more slender; its snout was long with a narrow, thin muzzle. In colour it resembled the red deer, except that its tail was light brown instead of dark. The hind was also bigger than her Scottish counterpart. There was also a fawn, a delightful, little animal with a thick, dark brown coat.

For the five marches between Maralbashi and Kashgar
600 (145 miles) we were lucky in having perfect weather. The

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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only incident worthy of mention was a most exciting wild-pig shoot which we had at Ordeklik among the thick tamarisk jungles. Half the village came out on foot or horseback, accompanied by dogs, and carrying bludgeons made of tamarisk shoots with heads the size of cricket-balls carved out of the root of the bush. I made them drive a long stretch of jungle and was lucky enough to secure with my rifle an enormous pig, on the succulent hams of which we and the entire Russian colony at Kashgar afterwards feasted. The pigs do a great deal of damage to the crops of the Ordeklik people, who hunt them with their dogs and clubs most pluckily. 224

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During the " Indian summer " of mid-November in Central Asia the clearness of the air is extraordinary. From Lungkor, half-way to Kashgar, we saw plainly the snows of the Qungur range, more than 120 miles away, rising above the south-western horizon like icebergs from the desert sea. Though we reached Kashgar as late as 16th November, it was still pleasantly warm, nor was there any sign of ice on the marsh-lakes; yet a fortnight later the land was in the grip of winter and the ice on the lakes was a foot thick.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER XV

UNDER THE NORTHERN RIM OF TIBET

IN the spring of 1924 official business along the south-eastern road once more demanded my personal attention. Leaving Kashgar on 1st March and spending a busy fortnight at Yarkand, we reached Keriya on 12th April after short halts at Posgam, Karghalik, Goma and Khotan. On the way home we broke new ground between Keriya and Khotan and again between Khotan and Karghalik; but on the outward journey we used the same direct caravan route which we had already twice traversed, and I will therefore confine myself as far as Keriya to a few passages from diaries and letters.

Yarkand, 7th March, 1924.

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On the wide grassy plain south of Yangi Hissar this morning we overtook a caravan of camels carrying Tashkend sugar and Baku oil from Kashgar to Khotan. They were fine shaggy brutes and as impressive as camels always are when you see them in long strings filing across the wide spaces of the earth. But what marked this caravan among all I have ever seen—or heard—was its music. Never was there such a carillon of bells as that which rose to heaven from this slow-moving train of unmusical-looking antediluvians. There were loud bells and soft bells, big clanging bells and little bubbling bells, high-pitched bells and low booming bells and cracked bells, double bells one inside the other, copper bells from Kashgar and iron bells from Toqsun far along the road to Mongolia. Some of these latter have as clappers—what do you think? Camels' bones. I bought one the other day as a curiosity. There is something grimly pathetic about the idea of camels padding week after week, month after month, across Asia with the bones of their predecessors tinkling in the bells at their necks.

We had a really brilliant day for our "triumphal entry" into Yarkand with about a hundred British subjects of all kinds and religions mounted on more or less unmanageable ponies behind us. Yarkand as a whole took the utmost interest in our arrival, for it had been rumoured that we had gone back to India and that a former incumbent of the post had returned. I was amused to hear a woman in the bazaar say to a friend as I rode past *Bulturki Consul shu* (This is last year's Consul).

10th March.

The new Commandant of the Yarkand garrison is of a type that 701 is new to me, for unlike all the officials I have met hitherto he is a native of Sinkiang, though pure Chinese. His forebears, he tells me, have been in the military service of the Urumchi Government for six generations, i.e. ever since the last reconquest but one, in 1758. Incidentally, he is about as un-martial-looking a person as can be imagined; but he has had quite a varied and interesting career none the less. He has been to Manchuria and Moscow; he has been on expeditions against brigands in wild Kansu; he was once staff officer to a general who was banished to Sinkiang for implication in the Boxer rising. But perhaps his most unusual job was when he and two other " wei-yuans " (officers on special duty) were detailed to take 500 Kalmuck horses from Urumchi to Peking as a present to the great Yuan Shih-kai. I asked him whether the whole number arrived safely after the 2,000-mile journey, mostly across the desert? " Oh, we lost a lot," he replied, " but we had a big margin and delivered the 500 all right." I thought of the Hami melons they used to send to the Emperors, and reflected how the methods of the Chinese resemble natural processes in their disregard of waste.

11th March.

Last night the missionaries and ourselves were the guests of ex-Taoyin Chu at a Chinese dinner-and-theatre party at the Tientsin merchants' club. In China you do not go to the theatre after dinner, as we do; the theatre comes to you during it. A large courtyard had been roofed over with cloth for the occasion; on one side was a temporary stage, on the other a dinner-table set for about twenty persons. The place was filled to overflowing with hordes of Chinese attendants, clerks, interpreters, soldiers, policemen and bottlewashers of all kinds, behind whom crowded Turki hangers-on, street-urchins and other sight-seers. Several delicious children of Chinese guests were present; the prettiest was an exquisitely made-up little girl dressed in embroidered red silk with a wonderful ornament in her hair consisting of a butterfly in jewelled enamel and bright green Yunnan jade, with a quivering aigrette of fine gold wire spraying downwards from it. There was also a tiny boy dressed like a miniature mandarin in a fur-lined black satin jacket and black silk skirt, surmounted by an absurd green Homburg hat, who planted himself solidly in the middle of the narrow open space between our table and the stage and stared solemnly at the players for a long time. His back view was that of an exceptionally fat Amban about two feet high, one of the funniest sights I have seen for a long time.

For nearly six hours we sat at the big table while course after course of a full-length Chinese dinner came and went, and a travelling company of Chihli actors performed play after play opposite us. Except for its inordinate length, the entertainment was quite an enjoyable one, and most interesting. On the Chinese stage all the parts are taken by males; the characters speak in a curious and very ugly kind of falsetto sing-song, the voices of the " actresses " differing from those of the actors only in being shriller and more strident. In the classical plays, which form the majority of the repertoire, the chief personages, Emperors, Courtiers, Generals and the like, wear magnificent embroidered cloaks surmounted by vast fantastic head-dresses and masks. A feature of some of the pieces was the acrobatic dancing. The evolutions performed by the acrobats and the speed of their movements on the small and crowded stage, especially in the battle-scenes, astonished us. The most extraordinary dance was that of four very stout Generals in one of the old war-plays. They came on wearing wonderful cloaks, masks and enormous pagoda-like erections on their heads, at the back of which rose a kind of trophy of four small flags. These vast grotesque figures danced like two-year-olds, the flags behind their heads waving wildly in the breeze. Their ordinary walk, too, was inexpressibly comic; it was a kind of goose-step, and every now and again for no apparent reason they would stand for several seconds on one leg with the other held out horizontally in front of them, toes upright, the body perfectly straight and leaning well *forward*. How they could stand up at all in such a position was a mystery; they must have had some sort of Little Tich shoe-attachment, cleverly concealed.

At these "command" performances it is customary for the actor-manager to put on plays from his repertoire (they all seemed to be short, about the length of an average curtain-raiser) according to the wishes of the chief guests, who are expected to reward him liberally for the compliment. A long red paper scroll is brought round inscribed with the names of the plays, from which you choose your fancy. We foreign guests had, of course, to rely on the Consulate interpreter, C., to tell us the titles of the plays; D. and I chose classical war-pieces, Mrs. L., of the Swedish Church Mission, one about brigands which she thought would be exciting. It was, but not quite in the way she expected. It proved to be highly improper—the only improper play we had the whole evening, and also, I am sorry to say, the most popular. The "gallery," of course, thought that the foreign lady had chosen it on purpose. They approved highly of her taste and kept looking round at her with delighted grins to make sure that she did not miss any of the points, especially during what was apparently a most realistic imitation by the leading "lady" of a Chinese nautch-dance. What made matters worse was that C., who is immensely proud of his command of the language, in spite of furious winks and head-shakes from me, insisted on explaining in a loud voice exactly what was happening and which of the female characters were no better than they should be. It was most embarrassing and we were all covered with confusion.

Another of the "classical" plays, which was also about brigands but not in the least *risqué*, had the following plot. Robbers kidnap the Governor of a province, and a band of public-spirited citizens determine to rescue him by means of a ruse. Dressing up as a troupe of actors in full rig, with swords and clubs concealed under their costumes, they drive in carriages through the mountains in which the brigands have their fastness. The carriages and horses are represented by an amusing convention; the occupant of the "carriage" holds a pole horizontally in each hand by his side, the fore ends of the poles being held by a boy who prances in front of him representing the horse, the rear ends by a much-padded "coachman" who walks sedately behind. This gives much scope for comic relief; the "horse" jibs

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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KASHGARI FISHERMEN AT WORK IN A CANAL ~~[4-39~~

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ON TOUR IN THE PLAINS; OUR CARTS STARTING OUT FROM A CHINESE REST-HOUSE

[Face p. 246]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

and bolts, the driver falls off the "box" and the carriage upsets. The supposed actors are duly captured and dragged off to the brigands' lair. Here they are made to play and dance for the amusement of the Chief, who is a magnificent sight in his voluminous yellow embroidered robe, huge black and red mask of appalling ferocity and head-dress of immense size and complexity. At the psychological moment the actors throw off their cloaks and draw their weapons; a battle-royal ensues in which the Chief of the Brigands, fighting for his life, lays about him in the most approved style. Eventually the rescue-party defeat the robbers, take their Chief prisoner, and escort the Governor back to his capital in triumph. During the last half-hour of this performance the noise made by the orchestra passed all bounds. The musicians were specially reinforced by men with brass trays and large solid cymbals which they clashed and banged until I, for one, felt as if they were performing directly on my nervous system. D. said afterwards that hers, especially in her feet, was so numbed by cold and the absorption of thirty odd courses of shark's fin, sea-slug, etc., that the noise scarcely affected it. We eventually escaped with difficulty at midnight, having been there since a quarter past six; the theatre was still in full swing and the children were still looking on. Wonderful people, the Chinese.

Zanguya, 30th March.

177 647 Two rather interesting persons were in possession of the rest-house when we arrived and courteously turned out to make room for us. They might be called "Sino-Turkis," for they are Muhammadans of Khotan who for the sake of preferment have adopted Chinese manners, speech and dress. I asked them round to tea and made them tell me all about themselves in their native Turki. One of them said that he had been sent to the Chinese school as a child (doubtless by ambitious parents of the Beg class), and at the age of twenty-five or so had been selected by the Amban of his district (Lop) out of twenty-seven candidates to represent it on the Provincial Council at Urumchi; "Doumalik" he called himself, explaining. The Council or "Douma" of Sinkiang is an advisory body summoned by the Governor, the members of which are theoretically representative of the people, one from each administrative district, but are really nominated by the Ambans; they sit for a fixed term of three years. Our friends had been much impressed by their time at Urumchi and spoke with bated breath of the capital and its ruler; the process of Sinization has evidently been complete. The men impressed me favourably; their manners were perfect and their speech cultivated. One of them in particular, Rajab by name, was most intelligent and looked a thorough gentleman with his neat, short black beard and moustache, black velvet cap trimmed with marten-skin and black satin fur-lined Chinese clothes. He said he was on his way to Karghalik where he had been appointed "Suloya" or chief of police; his friend was going to Goma in a similar capacity.

It seems that Chinese dress is essential for all Turkis who are candidates for Ambanships. But I notice that these men's costume is not purely Chinese; like the designs on Khotan embroidery and carpets, it is a mixture of Mussulman and Chinese. They wear the Turki *tumāq* or cap, as well as the *ōtek* and *kafsh-massi* or Russian

177 647 boots and overshoes of Kashgar. Besides Wang Tungling of Uch Turfan, I have heard of two or three other cases of Sinized Turkis holding office. Not long ago I met a Bai man of the same type who was passing through Kashgar on his way to the Pamirs as a *wei-yuan* to inquire on behalf of the Urumchi Government into the complaints of the Sariqolis against their Magistrate. Then there was a Mussulman Amban of Kelpin who was relieved of his appointment quite recently after two or three years' tenure; he was not a success, I believe.

Zawa, 1st April.

487 We have been lucky in having perfect weather at this time of year for the crossing of the sandy belt between Zanguya and this place. We might have been caught in one of the sandstorms (Turki *burân*) for which early summer is notorious in these parts. Harding had a most unpleasant time in one last May. Whole caravans have been lost on this section of the road, missing the track in a storm and wandering out into the Takla Makan, where the water is 200 ft. or more below ground-level. For centuries the track has been marked every hundred yards or so on the worst bits by "basket potais" or curious elongated baskets about four feet in length placed on end and filled with sand. It is wonderful how long these last and how the baskets, or remnants of them, remain in position even when upset, as they usually are; stone posts would have sunk into the sand long ago. There are also of course the ordinary "potais" or towers of mud-brick at intervals of ten Chinese *li* (2¼ m.) which are, or ought to be, found along all main roads; these make excellent landmarks.

Khotan, 7th April.

796 The fast of Ramazan began a few days ago, and is rather a trial to us as well as to the greedy Turkis. They miss their food in the daytime; we miss our sleep at night. Badruddin's house where we are staying has a fine garden at the back, but the house itself is in the middle of the bazaar and we get the full benefit of the turning of night into day which marks Ramazan in the towns. The walls of the houses are merely lath and plaster and sounds travel through them like paper. The whole town seems to be talking at once until nearly midnight, when the chief meal of the 24 hours is cleared away. Then at 2.30 a.m. the drums begin beating to awaken the Faithful for the preparation of the second meal of the night. These tom-toms are dreadful; they go on for an hour or more, varied only by the monotonously-chanted refrains of the singing dervishes. From four onwards the whole town is wide awake and busy either cooking, talking or intoning the *sahri* or prayer of dawn. Add to this the normal early-morning noises of Kashgaria, cocks crowing, donkeys braying, birds twittering, pigeons cooing, cows lowing, horses neighing and stumping about in their stalls. . . . If one's blood is well oxygenated, as it is on the march, one listens to this sort of thing for an hour or so and sleeps the rest of the night soundly enough; in a town this is not so easy.

Lop, 8th April.

000 W——, Amban of this district, is a refreshingly unconventional official. Last year when he was late at the wayside tea-drinking

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

he explained that he had been cooking our lunch; and an excellent lunch it was, with a minimum of sea-slugs and other atrocities and plenty of well-cooked *pilaus* and roasts. This time owing to an interesting event—the arrival of his ninth daughter—on the very day we came, we were let off both the arrival and departure tea-drinkings, a great concession. Usually as cheerful as could be, W—— greeted me later with a long face and his right hand raised with the forefinger bent in the shape of a hook, which I understand is the Chinese finger-language sign for "nine." He appears to have had a most anxious time about his wife this morning, not so much because she was unconscious for two hours, but because of her fury when she came to and found she had given birth to a ninth daughter, having had no sons.

We have a fellow-traveller in Lop to-night whom I would very much like to meet, only I fear he will be starting very early to-morrow. He is a young man of 22, known as the "Gong Amban" or "Gong Beg." He is the great-grandson of Niaz Hakim Beg, last of the indigenous rulers of Khotan, who like Taj Hakim Beg of Kashgar and Durgah Beg of Yarkand was shorn of his power by the Khoqandi upstart Yakub Beg "Bedaulat" in 1864 and finally reduced to the position of a political pensioner by the Chinese when they came back in 1877. The present Gong Beg, I am told, receives a pension of 400 taels (£46) a month in return for which he is supposed to be always ready to assist the Chinese with a contingent of men in case of need. The interesting thing is that he received orders from Urumchi a short time ago to proceed to Aqsu with five hundred men. The poor boy was horrified, as he has never shot so much as a sparrow in his life and could only find twelve retainers to go to Urumchi with him. As one would expect, he has no influence in Khotan—the Chinese see to that—and all he has been able to do is to raise 5,000 taels from various sources with which to buy himself off at Urumchi. He and his party are not travelling by the usual route along the Khotan River to Shahyar and Kucha, but by the very trying eastern route viâ Cherchen and Lop Nor. I cannot understand why he is doing this, especially with the hot weather coming on. Something is happening in the north, I can't make out what; ex-Taoyin Chu at Yarkand received sudden orders a fortnight ago to proceed at once to Aqsu, and the Pamirs garrison has also suddenly been sent to the same place.

Besh Toghraq Langar, 9th April.

Once more we are in the midst of desert sands. The Khotan oasis never looked so beautiful as it did this morning when we said good-bye to it for a while soon after leaving Lop. The tender mist of spring rested upon fields along the very verge of the dark-grey wastes of gravel desert, pale green where the wheat was sprouting, emerald for the young lucerne. Over the road drooped gracefully the long fronds of the weeping willows, trees which in the Khotan oasis grow to a size undreamed of in England. Tall flame-shaped poplars and the ubiquitous pollarded willow of Kashgaria marked the boundaries of every plot. But we had no eyes for green when on all sides glowed peach-blossom of every shade from rose to delicate shell-pink, set off here and there by the luxuriant foam-white of the quince-orchards. On the trunk of every tree hopped and tapped and peeped at us a

000 pretty kind of woodpecker I have not seen elsewhere; it is larger than the English bird and has a scarlet crest, black and white bands on its wings and scarlet again under its body and tail.

Keriya, 13th April.

685 We had a welcome diversion on the long and rather dreary march between Achma and this place yesterday. In the middle of a belt of sandy steppe 20 miles wide we were suddenly accosted by a weeping peasant woman and her son, a sturdy shepherd boy, who informed us that their hut close by had just been robbed. The father, it appeared, had gone to market, and two thieves had seized the opportunity to come and loot the few pots and pans the poor folk possessed. The lad, who seemed plucky and intelligent, had run after the thieves and thought they had dumped the booty somewhere among the reeds and would come back for it. He pointed out the direction in which they had gone. Without a moment's delay I, my three orderlies, the Beg who accompanied us and his servant charged off helter-skelter across the steppe, spreading fan-wise as we went, while D. and Murad Qari remained on the road comforting the lady. It was bad going and the horses floundered about among dunes and patches of long grass, but before we had gone a mile there was a hurroosh on my right and a view-holloa from Hafiz; two running figures could be seen dodging among the dunes, and off we went after them in full cry. My horse went head over heels in a bad bunker, so that I was not in at the death, but when I came up there were two hulking scoundrels in custody of the Beg. After some prevarication they confessed that they had robbed the poor woman, so we tied their hands and dragged them back to the road where they were duly identified by the delighted boy. At first they refused to say where the booty was, but threats of the Amban's wrath soon prevailed upon them to show us where they had hidden it in the long grass. It was pathetic—a couple of battered copper tea-pots and a small basin, all black with the soot of years, and a dilapidated old blue quilted coat with brass buttons, evidently the absent bread-winner's only change of clothes. We visited the poor woman's home near by, a couple of tiny huts more than half underground and roughly roofed with reeds and turf. Here I photographed the scene and the entire caste, together with the properties, and then the woman fetched us a jug of water from a neighbouring spring by way of hospitality. Poor thing, she could do nothing but weep and quaver "Ashkalla! Ashkall-la!" (thank you) and try to embrace D., whom she evidently looked upon as her deliverer and sole refuge among all the rough men who surrounded her. We took the robbers off with us, trotting at the stirrups of Hafiz and the Beg, and made a present of them to the Amban of Keriya. They turned out to be real bad characters who had been convicted of robbery a year previously and had been punished with a thousand stripes and banishment to Cherchen; it had not been known that they had already found their way back from that remote spot. The Amban, I am sorry to say, did not seem quite as grateful as he might have been. Perhaps it was tactless of us to catch his robbers for him—the preservation of a Chinaman's "face" is a difficult and delicate matter, not to be lightly meddled with by the Western barbarian.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

Boghaz Langar, 17th April.

How we Took the Pelican to the Wilderness.

The pride of the Yamen here is, or rather was until yesterday, a full-grown pelican which was caught straying near the town and presented to the Amban two months ago. Yesterday I somewhat rashly showed an interest in the bird (I had no idea they were found in these parts) and tried to take its photograph, whereupon to my dismay the Amban presented it to me on the spot. I refused and refused, I protested that we were going back through the mountains with pony transport and could not possibly carry the huge bird, but without avail. When a Chinaman really wants to unload a present on you, he is adamant and makes it impossible for you to refuse it without hopelessly blackening his face. Accordingly, the same evening the pelican appeared at our house, escorted by two infantrymen carrying the Amban's red visiting " card."

What on earth were we to do ? We could not take the poor beast with us on top of a baggage-pony, nor could we without cruelty to both parties insist on the Mir Munshi taking it with him in his Chinese cart by the main road. At first we thought we would send it with one of our servants on a cart specially hired ; accordingly the local carpenter was set furiously to work constructing a strong and roomy wooden cage for him. Then we found that the pelican had to be forcibly fed ; he either would not or could not swallow any food, even fresh fish, unless three strong men rammed it down his throat and kept it there by *force majeure.* The Yamen soldiers told us that they had been doing this the whole of the time they had had the bird. They gave us a demonstration, and the process was so unpleasant and so obviously cruel that we decided then and there that the pelican must be returned somehow or other to its proper place—the wilderness. But how to effect this without the Amban hearing of it ? We were starting the very next day for Polu and had a 20-mile march in front of us ; time was very short. Far into the night we cogitated and schemed, and finally we made our plan. Next morning I sent word to the Amban that I would not be leaving till about noon, as I had work to do ; this was to prevent the Amban going out to his farewell tea-drinking too early. I then borrowed the Mir Munshi's cart, swearing him to secrecy, and arranged that the pelican in its cage should be put on it at the same time as the rest of our baggage was loaded up. The cart, in charge of one of the orderlies, Niaz (also sworn to secrecy), would leave with the caravan so as to put the hosts of inquisitive Keriya sightseers off the scent ; at the first opportunity it would cut down a side-lane and double back by devious paths until it struck the Cherchen road to the east of the town, where D. and I would meet it. Having found a secluded spot among the marshes two or three miles along the road, we would liberate the pelican and return quietly to Keriya, whence we would make our official departure in due course.

The plan did not work without some alarming hitches in its initial stages. First of all it was found that the cart could not be brought up to the door of the Aqsaqal's house (which is in the middle of the bazaar) because the lane was too narrow. The cage with the pelican in it had therefore to be carried down to the main street. Then it

000 was found to be too big to go under the hood of the cart. Tableau! There was nothing for it but to leave the cage behind and put the pelican into the cart by itself. This was done under D.'s supervision (I was busy with case-work and farewell interviews in the house) to the delight of the crowd. Our hopes that the pelican would be able to leave Keriya *incognito* were thus frustrated. Off went the caravan along the Polu road, D., pelican and all. Half an hour later, having ascertained that the coast was clear, I slipped out with Hafiz and galloped by a roundabout route to the ford across the Keriya River on the Cherchen road; here I overtook D. and the cart, which was jogging along with Niaz on guard in front and the curtain carefully drawn behind him as if it concealed my harem. We passed many country-people, families coming in to Keriya market from Oi Toghraq or Niya, wood-sellers driving donkeys loaded with faggots and so on; I wondered what they would think if they knew what was in the cart. Beyond the last fields of the oasis a shallow valley among grassy dunes led to the main river-bed half a mile to the north. For once we blessed the dust-haze of the Takla Makan which veiled our movements from afar. Loitering until a favourable moment when no passers-by were in sight, we dived off the road down the little valley, the lumbering vehicle pitching and swaying like a ship in a storm. Turning a corner we appeared to be absolutely in the wilds and were just congratulating ourselves on having shaken off all possible witnesses, when there on the top of a hillock were two boys watching us. Strong measures were necessary. I knew only too well that if even the smallest child saw us depositing the pelican in the wilderness, the bird's fate would be sealed; it would be recaptured and either done to death or taken back to the Yamen, whence the Amban would undoubtedly send it after us as lost property. . . . I decided to give the boys the fright of their lives, so I galloped straight at them; they ran like hares, I pursuing, until we arrived together at the small farm where they lived. Here I informed an agitated mamma that if she valued the children's lives she would send them to bed and keep them there.

Fate now smiled on us and we found that we could take the cart right down to the edge of the marshes. Here we took the long-suffering pelican out of "purdah." It was worth all our toil and anxiety, and more, to see the beatific expression on his face when he found himself once more on his native heath. On the grassy edge of a clear pool he stood proudly with his poor clipped wings outspread, as if offering thanks to the pale sun for his new-found liberty. But we could not leave him in too open a place, and so Niaz and I carried him down a secluded channel among the marshes and deposited him where no enemy would find him, safe from the Yamen and its forcible feeding, safe from the spying urchins of Keriya. . . . And there we hope he will find a living among the frogs and minnows until kindly Nature has lengthened his clipped feathers (already half grown), so that he may spread his wings and fly away northwards, far over the Takla Makan to the untrodden solitudes whence he came.

487 Before returning to Khotan we treated ourselves to a long-anticipated holiday trip among the Altun Tagh or "Mountains

of Gold" which form the northern rim of the Tibetan plateau. 487
Our first objective was the hill-village of Polu, three short
marches south of Keriya; thence we proposed to visit the oases
along the foot of the Qaranghu Tagh or Mountains of Darkness,
that wildest and most inaccessible central section of the
Kunlun which rises in the great massif of K 5 to a height of
23,890 feet. The trip proved somewhat disappointing, for
the hateful dust-haze persisted and we saw little along the road
beyond our immediate surroundings. Only once, for a short
hour or two, did the veil lift. Nevertheless the journey was
interesting in the extreme and on the whole enjoyable. Very
few explorers had visited this secluded bay beneath the northern
ramparts of Tibet, and the region may certainly be classed
among the remotest and least-known inhabited corners of
High Asia, outside Tibet itself.

The village of Boghaz Langar, at which the last of the 361
above extracts was written, is the southernmost village of the
main oasis of Keriya and lies at a height of 5,150 feet above
the sea, or 700 feet higher than the town. Close by we visited 778
the famous shrines of Imam Ghazz 'Ali, one of the heroes of
local Muhammadan tradition, and of a lady known as Bu
Hanifa. The place is remarkable for its plane-trees of immense [137]
age and bulk, veritable mountains of ancient wood, gnarled
and monstrous like boulders in a torrent-bed. Next day we 487
marched up the left bank of the Keriya River, passing one or
two small isolated oases, and camped at a point 6,500 feet
above the sea where the stream cuts through the foothills in
an almost straight canyon 300 or 400 feet deep. It was a
curious camp; though our tents were pitched fifty yards from
the edge, the river could be neither seen nor heard and we
seemed to be in the middle of a bare rolling moor of sand and
scrub. Every drop of water for man and beast had to be [312]
brought by hand in buckets and gourds up a terrifying cliff-track
known only to the guides we had brought with us.
Next morning the haze was thicker than ever and we could
see nothing of the massifs of the Altun Tagh, 21,000 feet high,
which we knew impended over us at a distance of scarcely 25
miles. For hours we toiled up sandy tracks, new reaches and
abysses of the river-gorge coming dimly into view at each corner.
I was impressed by the quantities of drift-sand everywhere;
even at this height the whole hill-side seemed to be silted up
with sand blown from the distant Takla Makan, in marked
contrast with the approaches to the Kashgar Range which we

487 knew so well, four hundred miles to the north-west. At midday we were met by the friendly people of Polu who had pitched for us a tiny tent made of sacks on a cliff-top 800 feet above the river-bed. With the indefatigable hospitality of remoter Asia, they had brought all the way from Polu, several miles further up among the mountains, an enormous meal of boiled sheep, bread, tea and hard-boiled eggs dyed bright blue, the favourite colour of Khotan.[1]

361 Polu is the largest of the hill-villages at the western end of the Altun Tagh or Mountains of Gold, a branch of the Kunlun stretching for a thousand miles to the E.N.E. until it merges 487 with the Nan Shan. The relative importance of Polu is due to the fact that it commands the only possible track leading up over the Kunlun to the northern plateau of Tibet and so to Ladakh and India. The defiles on the north side of the pass are exceedingly narrow and almost, if not quite, impossible for pack transport of any kind; but for a distance of 530 miles, from the Hindu Tash Pass (17,750 ft.) over the Sanju range in the west to the Qarasai gap above Cherchen in the east, there is no other path at all by which men can cross the 361 tremendous barrier of the Kunlun. Polu is picturesquely situated at a height of 8,500 feet on a ridge between two branches of the Keriya River's chief tributary. Its fields are lined with tall poplars and dotted with clumps of fine planes and walnuts. The village consists of closely-packed, flat-topped houses of wood and stone with curious raised skylights in the middle of the roof, and has a look of Baltistan or Tibet which differentiates it at once from the settlements of the hill "Sarts" and Kirghiz of the Kashgar Range and the Tien Shan. [563] Stein thinks that there may be Tibetan blood in the people, and certainly they do not regard themselves as belonging to the same race as the people of Khotan and Keriya. Polu and neighbouring villages do not belong to Keriya district, as one would have expected; they are grouped with [illegible]mlär, Chakar, Hasha, Nura and other oases of the great "bay"

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[1] The word *kök* (blue) is often used in Khotan as a synonym for "beautiful," without conveying any particular colour. I heard a minstrel sing:

Sai buida tört tufak
Törtilärsi kök tufak.
Four heifers on the desert's edge
And all four of them blue (i.e. lovely) heifers.

The reason why the shells of presentation eggs are always coloured is because white is unlucky, being the colour of death and mourning.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

of the Kunlun into the "Begship of the Three Hundred Hill 361
Families," which is under the jurisdiction of the Amban of Chira. The people of Polu complain of this arrangement, for Chira is twice as far from them as Keriya. They told me however, that whereas they have always been assessed at ten families only, they number about eighty, so that their cultivation is taxed very lightly.[1] They are industrious cultivators, 241
raising crops of barley, millet and lucerne on every available yard; but the dryness of this part of Asia is such that even 312
here, right under snowy mountains 21,000 feet high, crops have to be carefully irrigated. There are two methods of irrigation in use; where the slope is slight, the fields are terraced in the usual manner; where it is steeper, the entire surface is covered with a key-pattern of channels about six inches deep, down which the water trickles over the whole field, a most laborious business. The chief industry, however, 231
is stock-raising; though they look barren enough, the uplands in this neighbourhood grow excellent grass, owing probably to the fertility of the aerially-deposited loess which is found at the very highest elevations and gives a slightly dirty tinge even to the eternal snow. An excellent type of hill-pony, shaggy but better-looking and with finer hair than the Kalmuck ponies, is found here together with a black and very woolly breed of donkey; I bought one of the former for 32 taels (£4 5s.) and it turned out one of the best hill-ponies I have ever ridden. "Polu pony" as we always called him, besides being strong and willing, was a remarkably intelligent little animal and took in everything that was going on. On the long bare plateaux of Poma Qir and Chata Qir west of Polu we saw herds of yaks and camels as well as the ubiquitous sheep and goats.

An industry which would be of greater importance locally 316
than it is, if the Chinese did not strictly control it and limit the output, is gold-washing. There is no doubt that gold exists 135
in large quantities throughout the length, not only of the Altun Tagh but of the whole Kunlun system. I heard of gold-washing high up among the almost inaccessible gorges of the Upper Yarkand River; Stein mentions it at Pisha in the Qaranghu Tagh (Central Kunlun),[2] and speaks feelingly of

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[1] This agrees roughly with what Stein heard at Chakar ("Serindia," pp. 1320-21); that the number of families in the Begship was assessed at 221, but amounted in 1907 to 1,802.

[2] "Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. II, p. 210.

316 135 the appalling conditions under which the gold-miners work in the Zailik valley, 13,500 feet up among the peaks to the south-west of Polu; the well-known mines of Surghak and Chizghan, 60–85 miles E.S.E. of Keriya, employ 2,000 labourers even under the Chinese system. Gold is continually being found in new places between Chizghan and Tunhwang in Kansu province, 700 miles eastward. I heard at Keriya of three new mines, all rich, to which there had been miniature "gold-rushes" during the previous two or three years. All the mines between Polu and Cherchen are under the control of the Amban of Keriya, who farms them out to a Beg for a fixed annual weight of gold-dust to be delivered to the Chinese at the fixed rate of 25 taels per tael weight, about five-sevenths of the average market price at Khotan. The Beg is not supposed to extract more than that amount from the mines, but of course he does. He finds, pays and feeds his own miners, whose numbers are augmented at Surghak by numerous convicts. The Chinese do not allow the local people to wash for gold except for the Beg, and as his total output is limited by contract he does not often give the inhabitants of a village like Polu leave to wash for him. As a special favour we were given a demonstration of the primitive methods used. Three boys crawled into a hole in the conglomerate bank of the Polu stream and passed out tray after tray of blueish gravelly earth; a fourth washed it in a wooden pan shaped like a very shallow cone with a slit in it. From each trayful the boy got from two to seven tiny grains of gold, some red, some yellow; in a quarter of an hour he had washed out a quantity which he told us was worth a tenga (*2d.*) at the Beg's rates. In a day's work, he told us, he would get anything from one-tenth of a tael to 10 taels worth (*3d.*–£1 *7s.*).

609 000 The men of Polu are exceptionally friendly and hospitable to Europeans, a fact noticed by Deasy, Stein and the few other travellers who have come this way. The villagers still remember Deasy, though his visit took place as long ago as 1897. The stable in which his ponies were kept is pointed out with pride, also the room in which stayed the Chinese *ssu-yeh* or secretary who was sent by the Amban of Keriya to watch Deasy and prevent him at all costs from finding the secret path over the Kunlun.[1] One of the *bais* or chief men, Tokhta Khalfa, told me with pride that it was his father, Rahim Khalfa, who really helped Deasy to cross the mountains,

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[1] Deasy, "In Tibet and Chinese Turkistan," p. 308.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

He gave me a graphic description of how poor Qasim fell off 000 the path on the way up to the pass and was dashed to pieces. He agreed with me that it was a little thoughtless of Qasim, on the edge of the path with a 100-foot drop behind him, to tighten a knot in a home-made rope by hauling at it with one foot pressed against the pony's side.

They offered us the pick of their houses, but we preferred to camp on a sheltered field under a low bluff of loess above the village. If only the air had cleared for an hour, the glorious snows which we could sometimes just descry far above our heads would have completed an unforgettable picture; but the haze was inexorable. In front of us ‡ the 778 Tereklik ("poplar-y") side-glen sloped steeply up; perched on a crag above it was a conspicuous shrine which I visited one day. Besides the usual sacrificial yak's tails and pieces of clothing I found a curious and very old votive sign of wrought copper shaped like a hand-mirror with a fine pierced-work inscription. It reminded me of an object of similar shape and size, only with a chased design and inscription, which I saw at the shrine of Mir Umar at Sangun, under the Kuh-i-Taftan in the Sarhad district of Persian Baluchistan. How 000 I coveted that votive sign! I would have paid quite a large sum for it; but it has never seemed to me quite "playing the game" to tempt unsophisticated people to part with things which they hold sacred.

Four days we waited at Polu for the weather to clear, and then, on 24th April, we gave it up and started for Khotan. Marching three miles up the Tibet trail we struck westward at the village of Hong across the Chiriköldi ("The soldier died") pass and the wide grassy tableland of Chata Qir. The morning had been a little less hazy than usual, but by three o'clock as we descended into the valley of Zinjik Aral a violent storm of wind laden with dust and gravel and a spatter of rain swept down upon us from the Kunlun. Followed two unpleasant hours during which we hurried half-blindly down wild moorland paths. Only one incident do I remember; under the lee of a steep hillside above us we saw three huge black eagles squatting on the rocks, gorged doubtless after some grim feast. D. put them up; fine birds they were, with dark grey ruffs, light brown heads with black round the eyes and black beaks. In this country as in the Tien Shan they tame these black eagles and hunt gazelle with them. In the evening the wind was still blowing strong when, after ten hours' hard

‡ [At Polu -- Analyst]

marching, we came to the pleasant orchards of Jai Tuz at the upper end of the Imamlär oasis, scattered over a wide expanse of stony river-bed.

That night the wind dropped and the stars shone out brighter than we had seen them shine for weeks. I was up early, full of hope, and I was not disappointed. Right across the southern sky, above the orchards of the Imamlär valley, above the great rolling downs of Buzang and Chata, above the rocky homes of the mountain people, stretched a wondrous panorama of eternal snow. Our prayers had been granted, not a day too soon; before us stood revealed at last the Kunlun, shyest and most elusive of the great ranges of the earth, the almost impassable barrier behind which lay Tibet. Between eight and half-past I took a telepanorama of five plates which, though far from perfect, is one of my most treasured pictures; not because of its intrinsic beauty, which does not equal that of my Kashgar Range and Tien Shan panoramas, but because of the extreme rarity of the spectacle recorded.[1] An hour later, the haze had reappeared, and by noon not a vestige of the snowy vision remained.

From Imamlär we marched to Khotan in six days without undue haste. Though we did not see the mountains again, even the isolated massif of the Tikenlik Tagh (18,780 feet), across the wide apron of which we trekked for three days, we had some delightful glimpses of Arcadian villages tucked away in folds of the bare moorland. Nura was the loveliest; a green island in a sea of grey and yellow, six miles by two, with old wooden farms and mosques mirrored in clear pools, water-mills shaded by tall planes and orchards ablaze with apple-blossom, white and rose-red. On 27th April we entered the Khotan oasis south of Lop Bazaar and camped near the inn of Kutaz Langar ("At the Sign of the Yak"), where there is a domed tomb among desert poplars called the Shrine of the King's Daughter who Died in the Flower of her Youth. Next morning we rode the 18 miles into Khotan in a couple of hours.

Two days' halt was all that we could allow ourselves, for I was as usual behind my programme and the news from Kashgar was somewhat disquieting. Chinese troops were being concentrated at Aqsu in considerable numbers, and the

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[1] See folding page of panoramas opposite p. 116. Marco Polo, who travelled viâ Khotan and Cherchen on his famous journey to Cathay, makes no mention of any snowy mountains on his right flank, as he would certainly have done if he had seen the Kunlun or the Altun Tagh.

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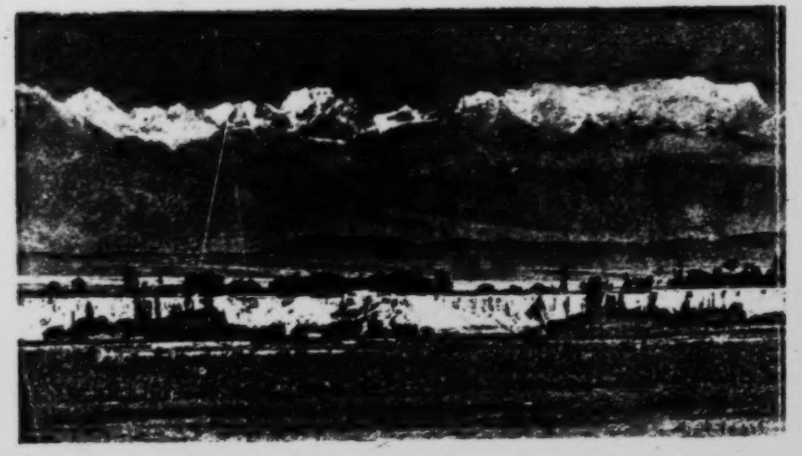
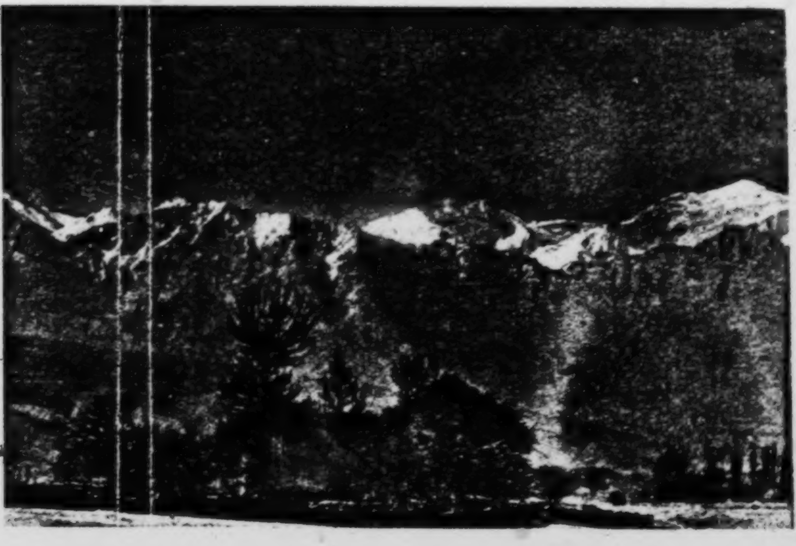
TELEPANORAMA OF KUNLUN MOUNTAINS FROM NORTH END OF IMAMLAR
Elevation 7,400 feet. Distance 16–24 miles. [Peaks identified provisionally from Sir



TELEPANORAMA OF TIEN SHAN PEAKS ON NORTH SIDE OF TAUSHKAN VALLE
In foreground, loess bluffs on left bank of Taushkan River. Elevation 4,400 feet. Distan

[Face p. 258 A]

500



F IMAMLAR OASIS, KERIYA DISTRICT
lly from Sir A. Stein's map, Survey of India Nos. 60 S.W. and 61 N.W.]

AN VALLEY, SEPARATING CHINESE TURKISTAN FROM SEMIRECHIA, FROM POIN
feet. Distance 31-34 miles

[Face p. 258 B]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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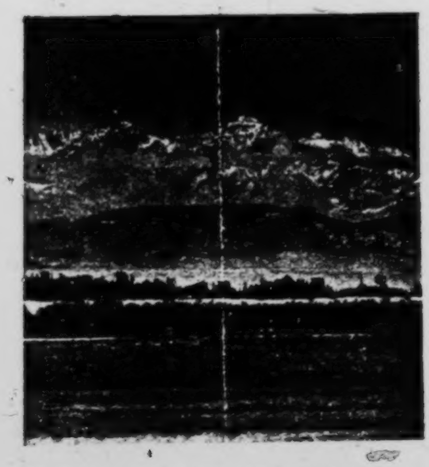
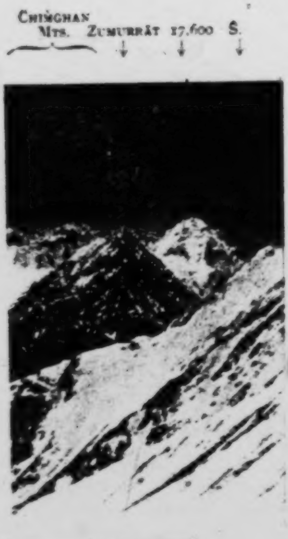
ARALLIK VALLEY



POINT 10 MILES N.E. OF UCH TURFAN

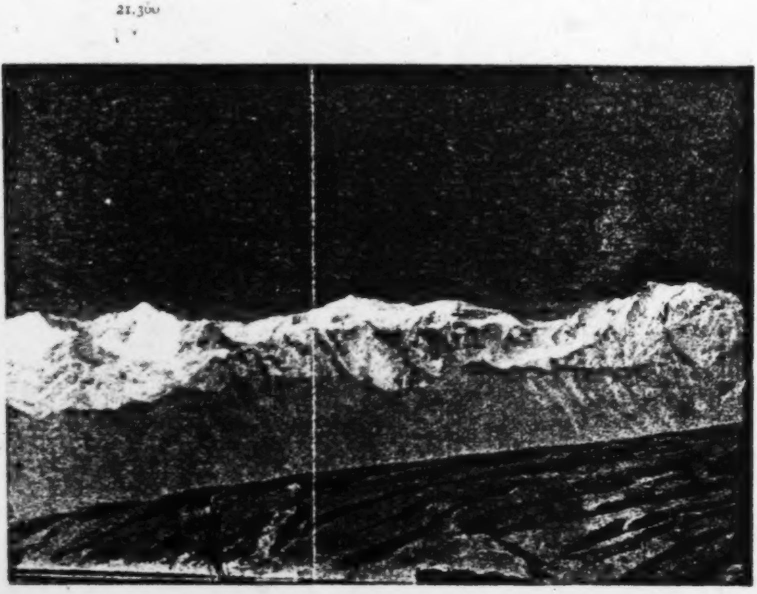

CHIMGHAN MTS.
ZUMURRĀT
17,600
S.
KAYING JILGHA

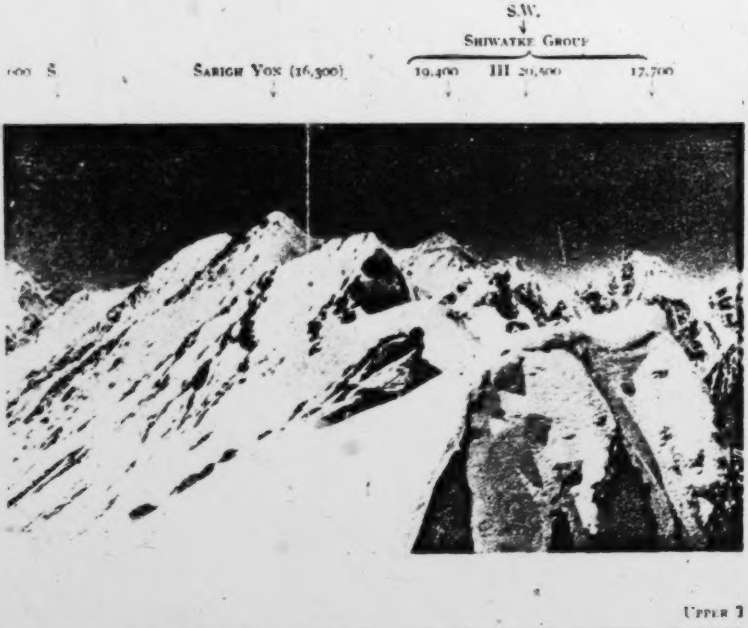
PANORAMA OF QUNGUR
TIGARMANSU JILGHAS
Elevation 15,600 feet

[Face p. 258 C]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

300

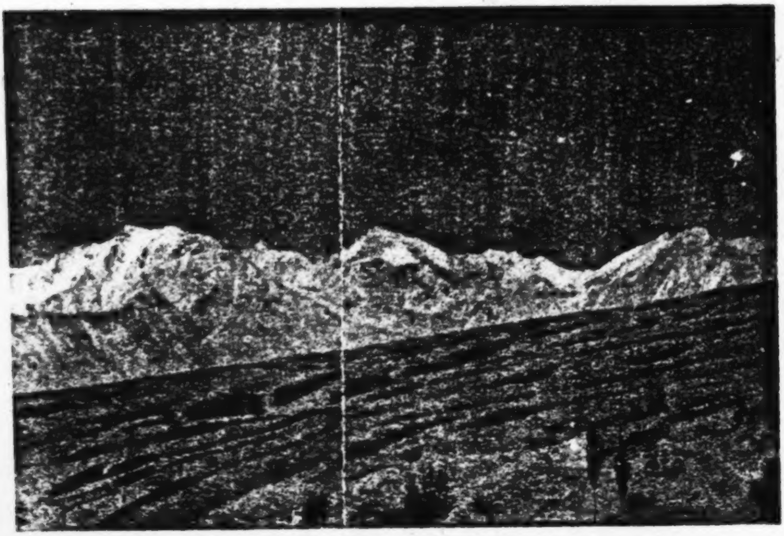


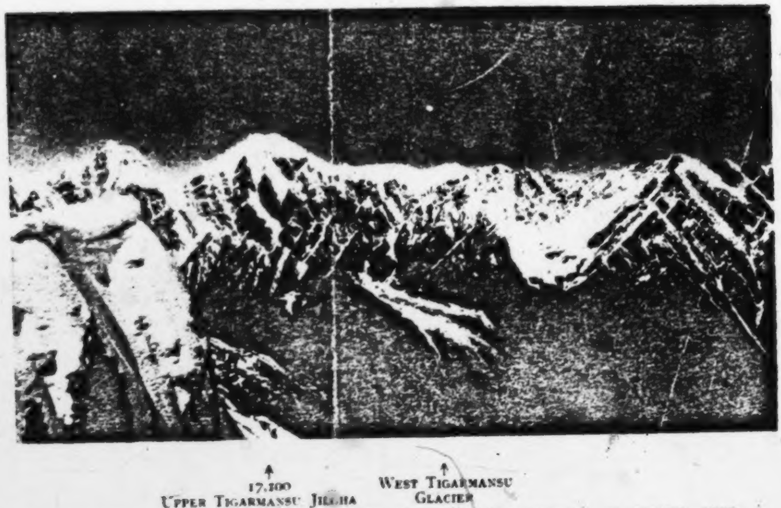

S.W.
Shiwatke Group
600 S.
Sarigh Yox (16,300)
19,400
III 20,500
17,700

Upper

NGUR MASSIF, SHIWAKTE GROUP AND PEAKS OF KAYING VALLEY
HAS

[Face p. 258 D]




Group
,500
17,700
Qungur II (25,200)
W.
Qungur I (25 146)
17,100
Upper Tigarmansu Jilgha
West Tigarmansu
Glacier

F KAYING VALLEY FROM POINT ON COL BETWEEN KAYING AND

[Face p. 258 E]

Titai was reported to be arming. Could it be that the civil war which had been so long endemic in the inner provinces of China was now to spread to the Far West? Reluctantly I decided to curtail my homeward tour-programme and abandon a plan which I had long been nursing; this was to climb one or more of the easternmost summits of the Sanju Range and reconnoitre from the north the untrodden gorges of the Qaraqash[1] River, 60 miles long, which had baffled even Stein. But the prospect of a fourth journey along the well-beaten Pialma-Moji-Goma track did not appeal to us, least of all under what we fondly expected would be the grilling sun of May. We therefore decided to take the comparatively little-used upper road to Karghalik viâ Duwa, Sanju and Kosh Tagh and thus break ground that was new to us.

487 On 3rd May at Zawa we bade farewell to the Kingdom of Jade and crossed the sand-hills of the Pigeon Shrine to lonely Takhtuban Langar, where the water is drawn from a well 200 feet deep. Thence leaving the main road we struck south-west, reaching Lāmūs in the Duwa valley late in the evening after a gruelling march of 36 miles. It was here that I visited the charming old Haji who narrated to me the local legend explaining the name of Lamus, recorded by me in another chapter.[2] I shall never forget the scene in the central room of the Haji's farm where Murad Qari and I sat sipping tea and talking to the old man and his well-mannered sons. The family were evidently animal-lovers. A very fat white pigeon sat on the back of a Qur'an-stand and joined in the conversation with such loud cooings that we had to raise our voices to make ourselves heard. An immense tortoiseshell cat purred furiously if anyone even looked as if he intended to stroke it. Best of all, a plump white lamb walked unconcernedly about the room throughout the proceedings, finally jumping up on the daïs beside me and helping itself from a plate of raisins on the low Chinese table by my side. When lifted down it repeated the performance, the Haji remarking delightfully that the lamb had become his *mihman* (guest) as well as I!

Resting a day at Lamus we performed another long march across the *sai* by Poski Langar to Chaskam in the beautiful Sanju Valley, where we halted another day for sightseeing. Then the weather changed and we had a most unpleasant march through Sanju Bazaar and along the main Leh-Yarkand

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[1] Not to be confused with the Qaratash River in the Qungur region.

[2] See p. 181.

487 caravan-route to Sulaghiz Langar. Icy wind and torrential rain caught us unprepared on the top of a pass, and we had to gallop for it 11 miles, only to find scarcely even the humblest accommodation available at the tiny settlement of Sulaghiz. Next day it was still cold and cloudy, but on 9th May when we marched to Oi Toghraq we were rewarded with the longest panorama of snows we ever saw, even in Chinese Turkistan. From the eastern end of the Sanju range they stretched in an immense arc to the northernmost peaks of the Takhta Kuram west of Karghalik, a glittering panoply of ice 180 miles long.

The rest of our return journey must be passed over quickly. Yarkand was reached on 14th May, and eight days later we were back at Kashgar, having covered a total distance of 936 miles on the last and by no means the least enjoyable of our longer tours in Southern Sinkiang.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER XVI

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

WE returned from Keriya towards the end of May to find Kashgar in a ferment of excitement. For some time past I had known that there was trouble brewing for our local ogre, General Ma, "Titai" or Commander-in-Chief of the forces in the south-west of the province, and self-styled King of Kashgar. Since the famous lunch-party of July 1922, described in Chapter VI, the situation had developed. The old bandit, drunk with power and firmly believing that there was no one in all Central Asia strong enough to call him to account, surpassed all his previous records in oppression. He robbed, blackmailed, mutilated, slave-drove and otherwise tyrannized over the unfortunate inhabitants of the New City and district to his heart's content, snapping his fingers at the remonstrances of the Taoyin and other civil officials. Farmers and petty shopkeepers began to leave the country in large numbers nominally on pilgrimage to Mecca, but in reality to escape the tyranny of the "Padshah."

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The interesting feature of the Titai's methods of self-enrichment was that they were not confined to those of the traditional Asiatic tyrant. There was a touch of the practical Chinese business man about him, for he did not content himself with merely transferring wealth from other people's pockets to his own; he created it. He claimed all the minerals of the country as the perquisite of the military authorities, and exploited them for his own benefit. His coal and copper-mines, his oil-wells and refinery, his jade-cutting factory and other enterprises, brought him large profits. As a capitalist his position was an enviable one; for he enjoyed a monopoly not only of raw materials, but also of armed force with which to secure cheap labour and push the sale of his products.

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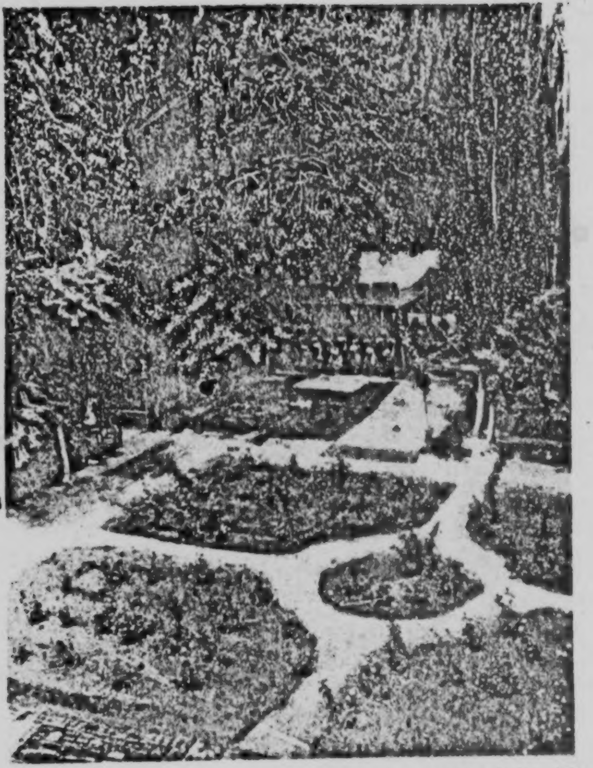
It would take too long to describe the various interesting

622 methods by which the unscrupulous General exploited his
661 command. One illustration will suffice. The chief product
of his shale-oil workings at Kanjugan, 30 miles west of Kash-
[315] gar, was kerosene, which was in great request owing to the
[382] failure of the Russian supplies. This he sold at monopoly
prices to the public, including ourselves at the Consulate. But for certain by-products of the New City refinery, such as paraffin wax, there was little demand. Accordingly in the winter of 1923–4, the Titai conceived the idea of portioning out the two towns into wards and appointing certain Begs and other trusty henchmen to distribute so much paraffin wax *per mensem* to each shopkeeper, whether he wanted it or not, at a fixed rate. The cobblers, who used wax in their trade, had to take double rations. Very soon complaints began to be heard, which were eventually voiced by the Aqsaqal or headman of the cobblers. He petitioned the Titai to let the cobblers off taking any more of his wax, as they were overstocked, besides which they preferred bees'-wax. The Titai's answer to this petition was to have the man beaten to death, and to fine his widow so heavily that she had to sell the house over her head to pay the fine. As might be expected, the underlings engaged in the distribution of the wax lined their own pockets liberally. They took to compounding with the shopkeepers at so much a head, and the forced sale developed into a regular monthly tax on shopkeepers. The distributors ceased to confine their depredations to the towns of Old and New Kashgar and sent agents all over the districts collecting the wax *gabelle* from petty shopkeepers in the remotest villages.

704 Apart from his industrial enterprises and his more direct methods of robbery and extortion, the Titai drew large sums from the Kashgar Treasury for the upkeep of the troops with which he was supposed to guard the frontier and garrison the towns. Needless to say, not a tenth of these sums was spent. The nominal strength of the Titai's forces was between 4,000 and 5,000; the actual number maintained may have been about 500. Most of these were quarter-trained, opium-sodden wretches who received neither pay, rations nor equipment, and lived on the country by virtue of the fear inspired by their terrible chief, and the antiquated (and in most cases quite useless) carbines they carried. But the Titai was wrong in thinking that he could eat his cake and have it, for his Gilbertian army proved his downfall.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

[Face p. 262]



MUHAMMADAN GUESTS, LED BY THE CHIEF QAZI, AT PRAYER IN THE GARDEN OF THE CONSULATE-GENERAL, KING'S BIRTHDAY RECEPTION, 1924

THE LATE GENERAL MA, TITAI OF KASHGARIA ~~[p. 88~~

622

647 In February, 1924, were heard the first rumblings of the
storm. The reports of the civil officials and the petitions of
622 the oppressed at last moved the Urumchi Government to
action. Orders came from Urumchi, nominally emanating
from Peking but really issued on the Governor's sole respon-
sibility, dismissing the Titai and abolishing his post. The
General refused to give up the seals of his office and defied
the Governor's authority. At the same time, partly for
702 purposes of bluff and partly in order to cut the ground from
under the feet of those who accused him of maintaining a
paper army, he hastily enrolled some hundreds of recruits
and gave large orders in the bazaars for new uniforms and boots.
Something had also to be done about the forced sale of wax,
the most unpopular of all his impositions. The Titai's pro-
622 cedure was characteristic. He arrested eight of his own wax-
581 distributing agents, charged them with collecting money from
the people without his knowledge, and ordered their fingers
and toes to be cut off joint by joint in the specially-constructed
hay-chopping machine mentioned in a former chapter. Four
of the men escaped or bought themselves off, the others were
duly mutilated and exposed at the four gates of the city,
their several limbs nailed to the wall behind them. One of
the poor wretches had already died when I heard about this
atrocity, but I had one of the others brought in by my orderlies
and cared for by our Indian doctor; the Swedish missionaries
did the same for the remaining two, and all three eventually
recovered. It may be mentioned that one of them was a
faithful servant of the Titai's who, when the latter's great
wooden palace at Pakalik caught fire three years before,
rushed into the room in which his master lay in a drunken
sleep and carried him out of the burning building.

647 But the cup of the Titai's iniquities was full. It will be
remembered that on the road to Keriya I had heard of an
669 ominous concentration of troops at Aqsu, 300 miles north-
east of Kashgar. Information I received at Karghalik and
Yarkand on the return journey showed that a considerable
force had been collected and was shortly to march on Kash-
gar under the command of Erh Taoyin of Aqsu, and that
Ma Titai was the objective. On the morning of Sunday
1st June, I had an early morning appointment some miles
from the town, and was on my way back at half-past ten,
when I was met by an orderly with a message from the Mir
Munshi to the effect that there had been fighting at the New

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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669

City and that the Titai was reported to have been killed. I galloped as hard as I could to the Consulate, where I found every one in a state of excitement except D., who was baking scones and cakes for the King's Birthday garden party on the following Tuesday. All our eight orderlies were in uniform, wearing their revolvers—their only arms—and knots of Hindu traders and other British subjects were standing about the grounds discussing the situation and spreading the wildest rumours. The only point on which every one agreed was that the Titai was dead (as a matter of fact this was not the case) and that the troops were coming over to the Old City for his son, the massive outer wall of whose citadel was within a couple of hundred yards of the Consulate gates. I took such steps as I could for the safeguarding of the foreign colony and awaited developments.

At about twelve noon a shot rang out from the Hsieh Tai's citadel, followed closely by another and then by a regular fusillade. Some of the shots came over the Consulate, and I had to make everybody take cover in case of spent bullets.[1] I went to see D. in her small private kitchen, and found her still baking cakes and quite unconscious of the fact that there was a war on. From where she was she could not hear the firing, but when she went out into the garden to feed the rabbits, which she insisted on doing, war or no war, she heard the "ping" of several bullets as they came over. A twig from a tree, cut by one of them, fell to the ground at our feet. The heavy firing lasted about a quarter of an hour, and for the rest of the day there were only occasional shots. After lunch I went round with a couple of orderlies to the gate of the fort to find out what had happened; I was told that the Hsieh Tai was lying dead and that the Government troops were chasing his soldiers about the streets and in the surrounding country, taking prisoner those who threw away their rifles and shooting those who did not. In the afternoon I received a call from a burly, round-faced, ruddy-complexioned, rather pleasant-looking Chinese officer, who showed me where a bullet had entered his thigh during the fighting. He proved to be second in command of the Government troops, the leader of which I was interested to hear was no other than the "Ma Darin" who, as Amban of Uch Turfan, had entertained me at that delectable place the previous September. It appeared that some years before Ma had been Amban of Kashgar New City, and that the Titai had then done him some great wrong; now, for the sake of revenge, Ma had asked the Governor, as a special favour, for the command of the flying column that was to surprise and destroy his old enemy. The wounded officer came on behalf of his chief to ask when the latter could come and call on me, also to apologize for having left us undefended during the fighting. In spite of my protests he insisted on leaving eight very tired infantrymen to guard us. We gave the poor lads a good tea, for they were dead beat, as well they might be; they had marched 20 miles by night, had rushed the Titai's citadel at dawn, marched 6 miles over to the Old City and had stormed the Hsieh Tai's yamen, all since sunset the evening before.

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[1] Probably no one fired on purpose in our direction, but I understand that in Chinese civil warfare a large proportion of the shots are fired into the air by way of frightfulness.

Next day I was able to piece together from various accounts the full story of the affair. It appeared that on 24th May the larger part of the Government troops, under Erh Taoyin, marched ostentatiously out of Aqsu and down the Maralbashi road towards Kashgar. At the same time a picked force of six hundred, under Captain Ma (as the ex-Amban of Uch Turfan was now styled) slipped off along the same mountain road, viâ Uch Turfan, Qaragor and Yai Dōbe, which we had followed on our way to Bai the previous autumn. The main body, under Erh, halted at Maralbashi, but Captain Ma's men, in seven forced marches, reached a secluded spot among the Artush hills, to the north of Kashgar, within easy striking distance of the New City. They had no difficulty in capturing the few scouts the Titai had out in this direction.

On the night of our dinner-party (Saturday, 31st May), Captain Ma and his men marched rapidly to the New City and waited outside the gates. The Titai, over-confident as usual, and imagining that his enemies were still several marches from Kashgar, had omitted to take the most elementary precautions. His soldiers, of whom he had several hundred in the citadel, were all asleep or under the influence of opium, and the gates were opened as usual at dawn to admit the villagers crowding into market with their produce. The Titai was asleep in his immense new wooden palace, a four-storied affair, painted red and elaborately decorated with grotesque carvings and frescoes. Captain Ma and a small band of picked men made their way straight to the palace, fired some shots into it, and called upon the Titai to surrender.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

647 669 He replied with a volley from the windows, killing an officer and two men. Captain Ma and his party dashed across the courtyard and up three flights of stairs fighting all the way, until at last they forced an entrance into the old man's bedroom. The Titai fought like a tiger at bay, wounding one of the party, but Ma with a lucky pistol-shot in the right arm disabled him and took him prisoner. With the capture of their formidable " King " the soldiers of the Titai, who had meanwhile been fighting with Ma's men in the palace and town, broke and fled. Only four or five of them were killed, the whole affair having taken place in less than a quarter of an hour and having been a complete surprise. The wounded tyrant was bound and taken to an inn outside his citadel, while the invaders looted his palace, which was full of valuables, chiefly in the form of opium, silks and jade. Telegrams were exchanged with Urumchi, and next day the Titai paid the penalty for his crimes. He was put up against the main gateway of the citadel and riddled with bullets, on the very spot where the bodies of his victims, alive or dead, had so often been exposed *pour encourager les autres.* His corpse was left there for a couple of days tied up to a kind of cross for the people to insult and defile, which large numbers of them did with the utmost gusto.

344 On the Tuesday I rode with a friend to the New City and returned the call which Captain Ma had courteously paid me the previous afternoon. The slayer of the Titai, a quiet easy-mannered little man with aquiline features and steady dark eyes, took me all over the fallen tyrant's palace. It was an immense wooden structure with four stories and a pagoda roof, painted dark red and covered with grotesque frescoes and wooden figures of symbolical birds and animals. I had heard much about this palace, which had only just been completed ; more than once I had peeped through its outer gates with a slight shudder at the thought of the sinister power which had called it into being. It was a curious sensation to find myself climbing flight after flight of steep stairs and entering a large central bedroom lavishly decorated with crude paintings. The walls, the ceiling and the great bed-alcove were all splintered with rifle- and pistol-shots and littered with arms and accoutrements, piles of ammunition-boxes, great-coats, and so on, for Captain Ma's soldiers had taken possession of the place. From the new palace we were conducted to the Titai's old Yamen along a kind of raised way, carried on

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AI Sinkiang AII

trestles, over the roofs of the houses and the streets of the 344 bazaar; this was the Titai's "Royal Road," along which he had been wont to walk between his old and new residences without soiling his feet with the dust of the bazaar. Between thirty and forty ladies of the Titai's harem were still living at the old Yamen when the blow fell; I was told that they were being treated kindly by our old friend Mr. Wang, Magistrate of the New City, in whose charge they had been placed. A horrible, toothless old major-domo of the Titai's showed us, with ghoulish gusto, over the warren-like zenana, still odorous of its late fair occupants, but turned completely upside down, looted and violated. Carpets were ripped up, upholstery torn open, tables and cupboards smashed to pieces in the search for treasure; for it was well known that the late owner had invested a large part of his ill-gotten gains in diamonds and other jewellery, mostly Russian revolution loot, which he had bought cheap from across the frontier. And everywhere was jade, great 324 blocks of it, half-polished slabs lying about, broken cups and half-turned bangles littering the ground; for one of the Titai's industrial enterprises had been the establishment of a jade-cutting factory in his yamen, by the simple process of moving half the Khotan artisans bodily to Kashgar and forcing them to work at starvation rates on the jade brought from his mines in the upper Yarkand River basin.

Throughout the whole of that week I was greatly impressed 647 by the orderliness of the proceedings. By the evening of the Sunday on which the Titai was captured all was quiet, and 669 there was no disorder on the part either of the conquerors or of the conquered, who in Chinese civil war are usually more dangerous to the civilian population than their rivals. If it had been the Persia of my Kerman days, every shop in the bazaar would have closed at the first hint of trouble and half the population would have been taking refuge (*bast*) against one side or the other. As it was, the only effect of the general excitement was an all-round rise of about 10 per cent. in prices. This satisfactory state of affairs was entirely due to the thoroughness of Governor Yang's preparations and the efficiency of his lieutenants; for there is no doubt that if the dispositions of the Higher Command had been less skilful or the revenge-seeking Captain Ma less bold and swift in his movements, the course of events might have been very different. The Titai and his son, knowing that it was war to the death, were preparing to defend the New and Old Cities

647 669 respectively; and if they had not been taken by surprise several days before they thought the Governor's troops could possibly reach them, there would have been much more bloodshed and many civilians might have lost lives or property.

538 The joy and relief of the Kashgaris at their deliverance knew no bounds. The popular feelings were amusingly expressed in a ribald ballad, which was being sung within two days of the Titai's execution, if not sooner. It described with much gusto the defeat of the "Bald Wax-Seller" by the Government troops, his capture and his subsequent execution, by "Ma Darin." The poetry of this effusion was not of a high order, but some of the quatrains showed considerable *verve*. Here are a few specimens:

539

The wily Ma Darin
He brought his Kalmuck lads
He fell upon the New City and took it
He seized the Bald Wax-seller and shot him.

By Allah! a wind arose
By Allah! a tempest arose
The soldiers of the Bald Wax-seller
By Allah! they have fled away.

The Bald Wax-seller who slept on cotton-wool
The Bald Wax-seller who lolled in his carriage
Who founded the city of Frogtown [1]
Four bullets were enough for him and he is gone.

Though he boasted in his pride
His soul was in the hands of God;
Weep not, O people of Kashgar
Your city too is in God's hands.

The fate of the Titai's harem was a matter which excited the keenest interest among the scandal-loving Kashgaris. Another of the quatrains ran as follows:

In the palace of Ma Titai
Forty vases of flowers are left;
The wives of Ma Titai
On an evil day are widowed.

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[1] The Titai built an immense palace at Pakalik, 12 miles south of the New City, but as mentioned above it was burnt down. The name means "full of frogs," for which reason the Titai changed it to Sukho and forbade the use of the name Pakalik.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

539

It was rumoured that Ma Darin, who was young and good-looking, had fallen in love with the fairest of his slain foe's daughters, Shujia Khan:

Word came from Peking
That Ma Darin was to return;
Ma Darin refused to go
Saying "They must give me Shujia Khan."

I regret to say that so far as I could discover there was not the slightest foundation for this romantic story.

Satisfaction at the destruction of the Titai was not confined to the Turki population. Shortly after the "war" D. lunched with a Chinese friend whose husband, an official of high rank, had lost much "face" in an encounter with the Titai two years before. The old lady, chuckling mightily, told D. that when she heard that fighting was going on at the Hsieh Tai's Yamen she ordered her carriage at once and drove over to see the fun. To her intense disappointment the officer in command would not let her in and sent her back to her garden with an escort of twenty rifles. Next day, when she heard that the Titai had been shot and his body exposed, she drove to the New City to see it. "There he was," she crowed, "the 'King' who had lorded it over us all and robbed people right and left for so long, nailed up to a wooden stake and all full of holes! Twenty-five holes there were in him, I counted them. There was an extra big one in the middle; Ma Darin says he made that. And all the Turban-heads were spitting on him and throwing mud at him and calling him "Padshah." His hands and feet were cut off, just as he used to do to people who annoyed him; they've been sent packed in a box to the Governor at Urumchi. I went to see the Hsieh-Tai too; he hadn't nearly so many holes in him, but he was just as dead as his father. Yesterday all the Titai's wives went in carts to Ma Darin to ask for food, as they said they were starving. He gave them a lot of rice and flour and two hundred taels to go on with. Some one offered to get carriages for them to drive to Ma Darin's in, but the Hsieh Tai's mother said 'No, we can't have carriages now, we must go in carts like common folk.'"

* * * * * * * * * * * *

By the time that the excitement of our small "war" had passed, midsummer was upon us and we realized sadly that the sands of our happy time at Kashgar were fast running out. My leave, two years overdue, had at last been sanctioned; during twelve years' eastern service I had only had six months'

008 home leave, and the opportunity of a long spell was not to be missed. My successor, Lieut.-Col. R. Lyall, I.A., was already on his way from England and was expected to arrive towards the end of August. There was just time to treat ourselves to a farewell visit to the Alps of Qungur, where much mapping still remained to be done and many desirable photographs were as yet untaken. I postponed our start until 22nd July, partly in the hope of finding better weather at Kaying and less snow on my high climbs, partly because by going a month later than the previous year I hoped to secure the seeds of some of the plants which had then been in flower. This 487 time I decided to make first for the upper Yapchan Jilgha, where we had discovered a delightful camping-place on our way back from Kaying the year before; my object was to reconnoitre and if possible gain access to the Tigarmansu Jilgha, a valley immediately to the north-west of Kaying but completely cut off from it by the tremendous precipices of Kōk Dōng and Sarigh Yon.

July was unusually hot at Kashgar, and there was also a perfect plague of wasps brought on by the superabundance of fruit, which rotted in our orchard for want of enough mouths in the Consulate to eat it. The heat also caused the summer floods to rise to abnormal heights, and 15 miles from Kashgar we had one of the worst river-crossings I ever experienced. At one time I thought we would have to go home and wait for the floods to subside, which would probably have meant the abandonment of the trip. It was therefore even more pleasant than usual to find ourselves on 26th July encamped among the fir-woods and wild-rose thickets of the beautiful Yapchan alp, right opposite the magnificent red cliffs of Bozarga and Bele Tōk. Two days later, with an irreducible minimum of retinue and baggage carried on yaks, we dived into the great red sandstone gorge and crawled once more up the secret track to Bozarga. Crossing the At Bel pass (12,000 feet) without difficulty we zigzagged 2,000 feet down the grassy flank of Kōk Dōng and came to the prosperous-looking encampment of Oi, the summer headquarters of a minor Beg and seven or eight families of Kirghiz. Here, to my surprise, I found we were no longer in the Yangi Hissar district as in the Qaratash valley, but under the jurisdiction of the magistrate of the Chinese Pamirs at Tashqurghan, eight long marches away. The Beg did his best to make us stay the night with him and go back across the pass next day without venturing down into the wild

Tigarmansu Jilgha, the path to which he described as very difficult. The situation was saved, however, by an excellent Kirghiz of Tigarmansu called Yunus Akhun, a name and title which may be translated with some accuracy as " Mr. Jonah." This man, who reminded me strongly of the best type of Highland ghillie, proved to be of Bokharan origin, his father having migrated to the Chinese Pamirs from the Qaratigin mountains, which divide Bokhara from Ferghana. He cordially invited us to his valley on behalf of his uncle, Sikilak Beg, the headman of the three families which constituted the entire population of the Tigarmansu Jilgha. He said he would guide us and that the path was quite easy. Seeing that we were determined to proceed, the Beg of Oi lent us six fresh yaks in place of our tired ones and bade us God-speed.

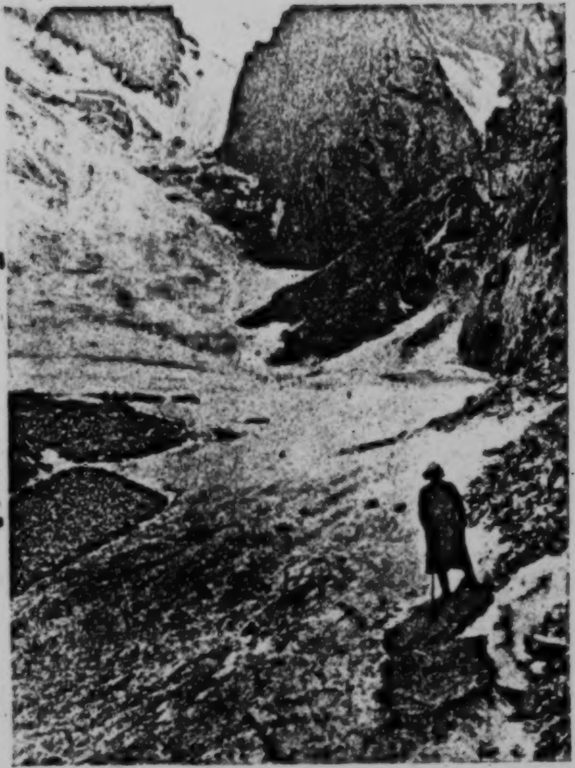
The track proved up-and-down and very narrow, but not dangerous, and the sun had not yet set when we topped the last col and found ourselves looking up the deep trough-like valley of the Tigarmansu or " Water of the Mill." Descending by a steep track to the foaming glacier-stream we forded it and made our way up through fields of meadowsweet till we came to the first tall firs. Here there was an old mill from which the valley derived its name, with a shrine and a sacred spring close by ; and here we were met by tall, handsome old Sikilak Beg. The tents of the Kirghiz were pitched a mile further up in a clearing in the thick forest which clothed what I afterwards found to be the ancient terminal moraine of the Tigarmansu Glacier. " Mr. Jonah " and his family insisted on turning out of their *aq-oi* for us and camping *alfresco* among the trees a few yards away, and altogether we were made very welcome. We soon found out the reason of their *empressement*, which was that the Kirghiz of the Qungur region had been talking about D. and her medicines and tea-parties ever since our last visit ; with the result that now there was the keenest competition among the different valleys to receive a visit from us. A girl from Kaying had married a Tigarmansu man since the previous summer, and now greeted D. as an old friend.

We could only allow ourselves three days in this valley, and to our disgust it was misty and rainy nearly the whole time. One of my objects had been to climb the Dilbagh " pass," a col about 13,000 feet high leading over to the Qurghan Köl Jilgha, another large unexplored glacier-valley of Qungur ; from this col I hoped at last to see the inner arcana of the great

487 range. But when we tried it the first morning, down came the clouds and we had to turn back half-way. I had also hoped to obtain a close view of the needle-like Shiwakte group from some vantage-point near the head of the Tigarmansu Jilgha; but the peaks which shut in the head of the valley never cleared of cloud at all. I had therefore to confine my attentions to the valley itself, of which I made a plane-table sketch. At the foot of the ancient terminal moraine on which the camp was pitched we found a remarkable phenomenon; a flood of shell-pink water gushed out from among the roots of the great firs and joined the glacier stream, the waters of which it perceptibly tinged with its own exquisite hue. Two miles above the camp, at the foot of the existing glacier 13,350 feet above the sea, we found the source of the pink colour; in the moraine were beds of red clay over which a strong stream flowed from the glacier for a hundred yards before disappearing into the earth. At [35] various points in the valley I noticed a greenish tinge in the rocks, which suggested copper. The Kirghiz told me that a rich vein of copper ore had once been worked in a terrifying and barely accessible cleft which they pointed out to me, high up on the precipitous north-west face of Kōk Dōng; it was so rich that in spite of the primitiveness of their methods the Kirghiz had for years smelted the ore and made pots and pans and cartridge cases out of the copper. In recent years the mine had been abandoned and its very existence kept dark for fear of the Titai's men hearing about it, as this would have meant the mine being taken over and the Kirghiz forced to work in it for the benefit of the Titai. It was for the same reason that they kept so quiet about the track over the At Bel Pass from the Yapchan Jilgha, which we should never have found for ourselves if old Samsaq Bai had not shown it to us. The Tigarmansu glen is accessible by this track alone, at any rate in summer; there is no exit from its upper end, and its lower reaches lie through a deep and narrow gorge impassable in the high-water season.

On our way back to the Yapchan alp, where we had left our tents, we visited Samsaq Bai and his clan, who were encamped this year just behind the fir-clad crest of one of the great precipices of Zor Qir. A grassy ridge dotted with clumps of juniper and fir, very much like a well-laid-out park, jutted out 1,500 feet above the Yapchan valley like the prow of a ship; all round the *aq-ois* the turf was starred with purple anemones, gentians and marigolds. The grazing was rich and the view

[Face p.272]



THE KEPEK PASS (15,240 FEET) FROM MORAINE OF KAYING GLACIER

AN AWKWARD STEP ON THE DESCENT OF THE KEPEK PASS

GoD

487 superb; but the place had one disadvantage. There was no water nearer than the spring in the Bozarga glen 600 feet below, from which the unfortunate ladies, in addition to their other multifarious duties, had to carry up all the water required in the camp.

From Yapchan we marched to Kaying Bashi, where we camped once more at the lovely alp below the forest. We could spare but eight days for the Happy Valley, and were fortunate in having four of them brilliantly clear. On one of these D. and I climbed with yaks to a height of 14,500 feet on the Torbashi Glacier. After lunch I left D. in a sunny corner with an orderly and climbed another 1,500 feet to the top of the knife-edge ridge which divides the Torbashi branch of the Kaying Jilgha from the head of the Tigarmansu Jilgha. There was a great deal of soft snow about, and with only a sturdy Kirghiz boy called Tash to help me I had considerable difficulty in reaching the top with my camera and surveying instruments. But it was well worth it, for I obtained not only some exceedingly useful "rays" for my map but one of the very finest mountain photographs I have ever secured, of the ice-clad peak of Shiwakte I (19,400 feet) piercing the clouds right opposite me at a distance of only 2½ miles. (Plate 164.)

Two days later, on 4th August, I carried out a plan I had nursed ever since we had first found our way to Kaying. This was to climb out of the valley at its head and reconnoitre the Chimghan Jilgha and the main Shiwakte group beyond. It will be remembered that I had hoped to do this the summer before, but had been baffled by the snow which closed the "pass" even in mid-July. Now, however, the Kirghiz pronounced the Kepek Bel sufficiently clear of snow for the crossing to be attempted; even so, the 1,000 foot couloir at the top was so steep and so filled with ice that there was no question of yaks going up it. I chose the two best *mergens* or ibex-stalkers in the valley as my guides, Phoken and Tümür by name, sturdy lads who looked regular wild men of the woods in their great sheep-skin caps; at the last moment the boy Tash, who looked like fourteen but said he was twenty, insisted on coming with me. The party was made up by our staunch Hunza cragsman, Sangi Khan. Leaving D. in camp for a night by herself in charge of the trusty Hafiz, we started at 5 a.m. with a supply of cold food and Bovril, my two cameras, a sleeping-bag, and my plane table and instruments tied up in a sack. We did the first 4,000 feet on yaks, then left

487 them to graze on the topmost pastures of the Kaying glacier-moraine while we attacked the couloir. On our left sheets of ice at angles varying from 45° to 60° came down from the precipices which enclose the head of the Kaying Jilgha and formed a couloir with the almost vertical cliffs of Shiwakte I on our right, along which we had to crawl the whole way. In several places steps had to be cut across tongues of ice running up into the cliff, and the kit had often to be sent up from hand to hand over difficult sections. Shortly after ten we reached the col, and I had a thrilling moment as I clambered to the top of a boulder and gazed over an imposing array of ice-clad ranges to the south. The atmospheric conditions were not good enough for a worthy photograph, but I was able to secure a complete set of "rays" which afterwards enabled me to fix the position of the mountains I saw. They proved to be those on the south side of the Chimghan Jilgha and its tributary the Tersöze, and one of them at least to be more than 22,000 feet high. None of them had been seen from this side by Western eyes before. It was disappointing to find that the Shiwakte peaks were hidden by a row of black aiguilles like the teeth of a saw which came down from the right. In trying to shelter the hypsometer from the wind I knocked it over and broke the thermometer; luckily I had a spare one with me, with which I obtained a height of 15,230 feet for the top of the pass.

The descent on the south side into a branch of the Chimghan Jilgha called Aghalistan proved easy enough, the way leading first down a small glacier and then at 13,000 feet striking a very large one called by the Kirghiz Aq Tash or "White Rock," obviously from its brilliant serac which is visible from a great distance. There was no sign of any track; the pass is seldom used, and we were the first over it that season. By the time we reached this point the clouds had shut down, and I could only see the lower portion of the vast precipices at the head of the main glacier, which I took to be those of the elusive Shiwakte. Further down we were met by two Kirghiz herdsmen, who were astonished to see us but led us hospitably to their huts. At my request they sent word to their headman, Sayat Beg, whose encampment they told us was a long way further down at the junction of the Aghalistan with the main Chimghan Jilgha. I had intended to spend the night there, but the weather was not promising and I was nervous about being cut off from Kaying and D., perhaps for weeks, by heavy snow on the pass; besides which I was suffering from a severe headache due to eyestrain brought on by long hours of peering through the sight-rule of my plane-table at the top of the pass and on the way down. I therefore decided to stay where I was and re-cross the Kepek next morning. Sayat Beg arrived during the afternoon and gave me much interesting information about his valley and the Qaratash basin in general. He told me among other things that there was no outlet whatever at the head of the Chimghan Jilgha, nothing but "*muz tagh*" or "ice-mountain" which he vaguely designated "Shiwakte"; that at the head of the Tersöze or southern branch of the jilgha there was a very difficult pass, worse even than the one I had come over, which led over to Little Qara Kul on the Pamirs; and that there were no fir-trees in the Chimghan Jilgha or in any of its tributaries.

My head was so bad that I could eat nothing that night and went to bed at nine in a somewhat depressed frame of mind on the floor of one of the huts. In spite of the elevation (over 12,000 feet) it was surprisingly mild and I slept well enough till four, when I awoke blessedly free from headache. To my joy I found that it had cleared up, so after a good breakfast I started at half-past five up the mountain-side. I was rewarded with the most marvellous spectacle I have ever seen. The Shiwakte peaks stood round the head of the Aq Tash basin in a glorious semicircle, their ice-pinnacles gleaming in the dawn, mighty glaciers hanging from their sides like frozen waterfalls thousands of feet high. The clouds were already collecting round them and by eight had completely hidden them once more, but long ere this I had secured some fine pictures and had also completed my plane-table sketch. The mountain-side was alive with Tibetan snow-cock, whose mournful cry, not unlike that of whaups on Scottish moors, sounded in my ears as I worked.

Our descent from the Kepek Pass into the Kaying Jilgha later in the morning was not without incident. It was perceptibly warmer than the day before, evidently banking up for heavy rain, and the ice was very soft. The steps we had made the previous day had melted, and new ones had to be cut; rocks loosened by the thaw came buzzing down from the cliffs above and had to be dodged; nor was it safe to avoid them by venturing out on the steeply-pitched glacier, because the thin coating of flat stones and frozen stones over the crevasses might now be insufficient to bear one's weight. As it was, 487 the Beg, who at my request came over with us to investigate some complaint of the Kaying people, had a narrow escape. He was just in front of me as we filed across an arm of the glacier, when suddenly he disappeared up to his armpits. The *débris* of flat stones which lay on top of the ice held him up, and we soon fished him out; but I noticed with a slight shudder, peering down into the hole, that his legs had been dangling over a crevasse of unknown depth. Near the bottom of the couloir we had to jump off the edge of the glacier on to a steep slope of loose stones, and in doing so started a stone-slide which plunged *under* the snowfield we had just left and went on roaring away underneath for a long time. At last, however, we found ourselves safely on the flowery moraine of the main Kaying glacier, where by arrangement a Kirghiz lad was waiting for us with the yaks.

The rain held off during our last four days at Kaying, but the clouds shut down more and more heavily and further survey operations were out of the question. We spent our time partly with the Kirghiz, whom we entertained at a big tea-party followed by games and races, partly in collecting and drying plants for Kew. It was disappointing to find that although we were leaving the valley a month later than in 1923, scarcely any of the flowers had yet seeded. Evidently maturing had been delayed by the exceptionally cold and boisterous weather which we had experienced in May on the return journey from Khotan.[1]

Our visits to Kaying, however, had not been fruitless. Though clumsy and amateurish enough, my plane-table sketches, sets of rays, panoramas and other material afterwards enabled Major K. Mason of the Survey of India, who has made the cartography of the Pamir region his own, to fill in with considerable detail the blank patch in Sir Aurel Stein's map which that distinguished explorer advised me to investigate. Those interested in the topography and orography of this remarkable region will find a full account of it in my paper on "The Alps of Qungur" in the "Geographical Journal" for November 1925, to which is appended a note by Major Mason on his compilation of my material. According to Major Mason, what he is pleased to call my explorations ". . . . fill in several important blanks in our knowledge of the eastern flanks of the Qungur massif. They give a very

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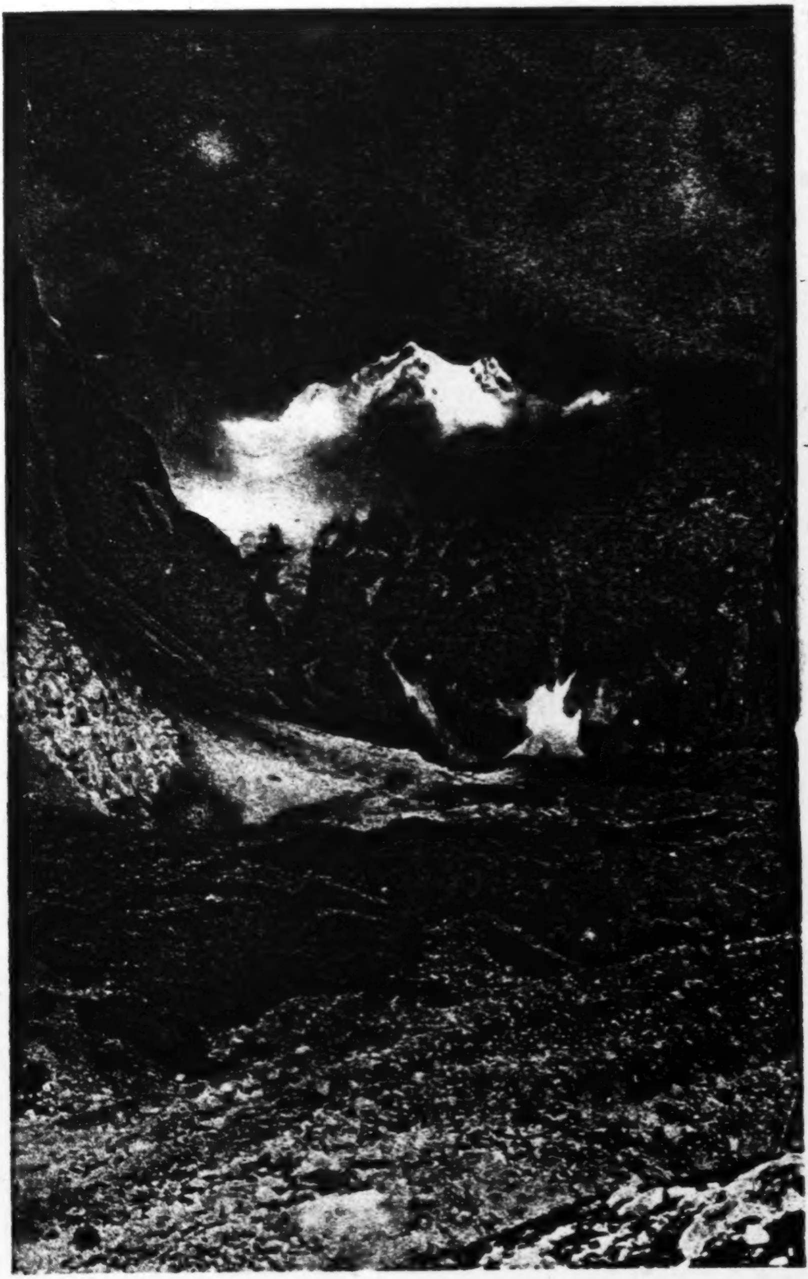
[1] Experienced also by the 1924 Mount Everest Expedition, 700 miles to the south-east.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AIl Sinkiang AIl



AQ TASH GLACIER AND PEAK III OF THE SHIWAKTE GROUP (20,500 FEET)

[Face p. 276]

~~[p. 175~~

487 good picture of the 'peripheral gorges of the Pamir plateau,' and while emphasizing the difficulties of the ground, reveal a certain amount of vegetation and habitation of which we had previously no knowledge whatever . . . . One of the outstanding features of the exploration is the further evidence of the existence of Qungur II. Its great featureless dome has been the cause of uncertainty for years. Its height is not yet settled, but we know now that it competes with Qungur I for the post of the highest point of the Pamirs."

On 9th August we said good-bye to the Happy Valley and our Kirghiz friends. We still like to think that they were sorry to see the last of us. The morning that we crossed the Chopkana Pass was misty and lowering, and my farewell impression of Kaying Bashi is of the valley as I saw it at about ten o'clock the evening before. Heavy clouds half-filled the sky and haze the valley ; in a gap right above the Shiwakte sailed the moon, her light shining full upon the glacier-stream which sped past me down its stony course. The night was calm and brooding ; the haze veiled everything except the gleaming river and the icy crown of the great mountain ; but standing out black even against the blackness rose on one side the nearer firs, on the other the needle-points of Zumurrat, far up into the starless heavens. All else—the lower precipices, the forests, the snouts of the big glaciers—all was wrapped in darkness and mystery ; only the river and the eternal snows glowed in the dim radiance of the moonlight. As I gazed spell-bound, there came into my memory the song of the shepherd-minstrel at Polu :

> The Power of God created the mountains, the mountains ;
> Then because it was dark among the mountains, He created the moon.

CHAPTER XVII

BACK TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

ON 13th August we rode into Kashgar at the head of our caravan for the last time. Little more than three weeks remained to us, for my successor had passed Tashqurghan and was expected on the 25th. They were crowded weeks of packing and preparation for our journey to Srinagar, of winding up official and private affairs, of handing over charge to the new Consul-General, of calls and interviews innumerable and feasts of welcome and farewell. Of the many and varied preoccupations connected with so important an event as a change of Consul-General, I will mention only one as an example. A Chinese name had to be assigned to Colonel Lyall and a wooden " chop " carved with the appropriate characters, from which a stock of the indispensable red paper visiting-cards could be struck. It was of the utmost importance that the name, while approximating to the Colonel's own patronymic, should have a lucky meaning, one that would give its owner " face " with highly-educated Chinese officials. Accordingly Mr. George Chu, our Chinese Secretary, was told off to christen the new Consul-General, and in due course he produced a draft name for my approval. It sounded something like " Lai-i-lu," and its three characters, as Chu showed me in Dr. Giles' monumental dictionary, meant " A pure dwelling upon Mount Lai "—the latter being a famous sacred mountain in Szechwan. What more exquisitely classical, more face-giving appellation could be imagined? I approved, and at my next interview with the Taoyin, a noted scholar, I asked for his opinion. To my surprise, the old mandarin was not at all enthusiastic and begged me to allow himself and Mr. Tao, his Foreign Affairs Secretary, to find a better name. Our production, he informed me, would give the new Consul-General no face at all. If the character " Lai " was pronounced in the second tone, all would be well.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

But most people would pronounce it in the fourth tone, in which case the name would mean " A strong man who refuses to pay his debts ! "

Colonel Lyall duly arrived, and ten days later, on 5th September, we started down the road to India. In Chinese Central Asia the maxim " Speed the parting guest " is taken much more seriously than in the twentieth-century India of railways, steamships and motors. Ours was no hurried official departure with perfunctory railway-platform speeches and garlands of heavy-scented marigolds, alarming though even this amount of ceremonial usually is to the self-conscious Briton. Between us, D. and I were bidden farewell at no less than eight different roadside feasts and tea-drinkings, before Kashgar finally let us go. D.'s description in a letter of her own experiences, though not exactly cheerful reading, is worth quoting :

> " C. had a lot to do that morning and could not get away till the afternoon, so as Mrs. J—— and some of the other Chinese ladies had asked me to lunch with them in a garden outside the city I left before he did. The first good-byes were to the Doctor's wife and other " purdah " ladies of the Consulate, and they were not altogether tearless ! The next were silent ones to the cats, the rabbits and other animals, and to the house and garden. Then there were the clerks, the Aqsaqal, the orderlies, house-servants and gardeners, and then I was riding through the gateway of the Consulate-General for the last time with a lump in my throat and my heart somewhere about my stirrups.
>
> " I found Mrs. J—— and the others waiting for me in the roadside garden which had been prepared, and lunch spread in a big pavilion, roofed but open on all four sides. We all made a pretence of eating but without much success, especially as Mrs. J—— was shortly leaving Kashgar herself for Urumchi and was nearly as sad about it as I was. ' You are going away to the South,' she said, ' and I am going away to the North, and God knows if either of us will ever see Kashgar again.' Out came all our handkerchiefs on the spot.
>
> " I took my leave soon after this and trotted off down the Tashmalik road, followed by Hafiz. Near the edge of the wide Qizil Darya river-bed I found the entire Russian colony assembled and a long table spread with cakes and other dainties under the trees and the inevitable samovar simmering in the background. Tea and a cigarette were very welcome and then there were more good-byes and I got on my pony again. A little further on, a number of the British subjects were busy erecting a platform draped with red calico in preparation for C.'s passing in the afternoon. They wanted me to stop and have some tea, but as they had only just begun to unpack their things I excused myself and apologized for leaving unexpectedly early, shook hands all round and piloted by Hafiz, urged my pony into the waters of the Qizil Darya. On the further shore the Swedish missionaries

were waiting with quantities of their delicious coffee and cakes laid out on a cool spot among the willows on the river's edge. As I drank my last cup, to my surprise I saw the Taoyin's carriage with an escort of Chinese cavalry fording the river, and when I came to the road again there was the new Taoyin's wife and the chief Yamen Beg with all the arrangements for a farewell tea-drinking set up in a wayside baker's shop. This lady and I had only recently made each other's acquaintance, so our good-byes were perhaps somewhat stereotyped. But they were by no means the last. Two miles farther on and quite six from Kashgar, Aisha Khan and most of the wives of the Consulate staff were assembled. They had left Chini Bagh before me in carts and had arranged their little tea-drinking in a field about fifty yards from the road, the carts being drawn up so as to screen us from the gaze of passers-by. I choked down a little tea, but cut the party short for they were all crying and it was all I could do to keep a stiff upper lip. They dropped their veils and came with me as far as the road.

" I said good-bye and rode off, but stood for a moment before reaching a turn in the road and looked back. I shall never forget the picture the women made, standing together under the trees, with the afternoon sun slanting through the branches on to the blue and red and purple of their dresses. Then I turned a corner, and they were hidden from sight."

487 September and October are the best months in the year for trekking in High Asia, and we did not hurry down the road to India. As far as Tashqurghan we travelled by an entirely different route from that which we had followed on the way to Kashgar in 1922. Instead of entering the mountains south of Yangi Hissar and crossing the Kashka Su, Ter Art, Yambulak and Chichiklik passes, we marched south-west to Tashmalik, through the Gez gorges to Bulunkul and thence southwards across the Pamirs to Tagharma and the Sariqol valley. This is the route used by the Consulate couriers all the year round and by ordinary travellers during the low-water season. Its length is about the same as that of the Chichiklik route, but it has the advantage of rising gradually to one easy pass only 13,600 feet high instead of crossing four steep ones going up to over 16,000 feet. On the other hand, during the six high-water months (say 15th April–15th October) the Gez valley is impassable for 25 miles between the lowest of the bridges in the gorge and its mouth near Tashmalik. To avoid this the traveller between Kashgar and Bulunkul usually crosses the " Nine Passes " already mentioned, two days' hot and toilsome scrambling over ridge after ridge among the barren outer ranges to the east of the lower Gez. This did not appeal to me, and I worked out a route which I hoped would

serve the triple purpose of avoiding the Nine Passes, reconnoitring a new " blank patch " which promised to be at least as interesting as the Alps of Qungur, and materially assisting my survey of the latter region.

From the top of the Zor Qir ridge above Bozarga in July 1923 Samsaq Bai had pointed out to me a pass called the Arpa Bel, about 20 miles away on the north side of the Gez valley between the Chakragil massif and a subsidiary peak called Sargalang (14,900 feet). He told me that it was regularly used by the local people, and led over from the main valley near Gez Qaraul to the Oitagh Jilgha, which he said was a very fine valley with fir-woods and rich pastures and many inhabitants. This pass was free from snow and did not look much more than 13,000 feet high ; no European so far as I knew had crossed it or visited the alps of the Upper Oitagh Jilgha at the foot of the tremendous north-eastern precipices of Chakragil. More important still, if only the weather was clear I would obtain from it an extremely valuable cross-view of Qungur and the peaks at the head of the Tigarmansu and Qurghan Kul Jilghas from the north. Instead, therefore, of crossing the Nine Passes we forded the Gez with some difficulty above Tashmalik, struck up the long Oitagh Jilgha and after camping for three days near its head crossed the Arpa Bel to Gez Qaraul.

The beauty and grandeur of the scenery we found at the head of the Oitagh Jilgha surpassed even the Alps of Qungur, and we bitterly regretted being unable to pay it more than a flying visit ; especially as the inexorable dust-haze of summer —the season was still exceptionally warm everywhere— robbed me of the photographs I might have secured had we been able to wait. On our third and fourth nights from Kashgar we halted at a village of small stone farmsteads called Agh Aghzi, eight miles up the Oitagh valley from its junction with the Gez. The inhabitants we found to be " Taghliks " or mountain-dwelling Turkis, " Sarts " as the Russians would call them. They were unanimous in their deprecation of any attempt on our part to penetrate further up the *jilgha* or cross into the Gez Valley by the Arpa Bel. That pass, they said, was exceedingly high and steep, and could not be crossed except with the help of yaks, which were not to be had. They were evidently surprised and rather alarmed at my knowing about it at all ; I gathered that they kept the existence of the Arpa Bel as quiet as possible, for fear lest the Chinese should hear

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

487 about and make it the main summer route to Tashqurghan. This would have meant the local people being forced to keep the track in repair, build bridges etc., as well as provide transport for officials using the route. I was interested to hear that two European travellers had been in the valley before, but neither of them had been further than the village of Pilal, 8 miles above Agh Aghzi; although the Oitagh Jilgha is easily accessible compared with the Kaying and other glens of the Alps of Qungur, no European had been to its head or across the Arpa Bel.

On 9th September we continued our march. Seven miles above Agh Aghzi the valley divides, the left or Pilal branch being inhabited by Taghliks and the right or At Oinak branch by Kirghiz. Passing Pilal village with its one immense plane-tree the track led up a wide valley at the head of which towered, incredibly high and blazing white even through the haze, the mighty ice-wall and splintered peaks of Chakragil.[1] Enticing "alps" below the forests of fir which clothed the steep sides of the valley beckoned to us, and we pressed on full of excited anticipation. The villagers had prepared a shepherd's hut for us two miles above Pilal at the mouth of the Arpa Jilgha which, ribbed with forest, led steeply up to the pass. But we would have none of it and camped two miles further up on a delectable meadow among thickets of fir, ash and rowan, perched high above the glacier stream and protected from the noonday sun by high wooded crags and pinnacles of limestone rock. Three *aq-ois* stood on another knoll just beyond and a crystal-clear stream bubbled out of mosses and grass near by. Here we spent three days, all we could spare, exploring the neighbourhood and making friends with the Taghliks.

/33 It did not require a trained observer to realize that the region in which we found ourselves was a perfect paradise alike for the geologist and for the naturalist. Its chief peculiarity is the relatively low elevation of the head of the Oitagh Jilgha. This forms a kind of recess or alcove in the precipitous north-east face of Chakragil, 14,000 feet high, into which the glaciers fall and thus push down their snouts to a much lower level than

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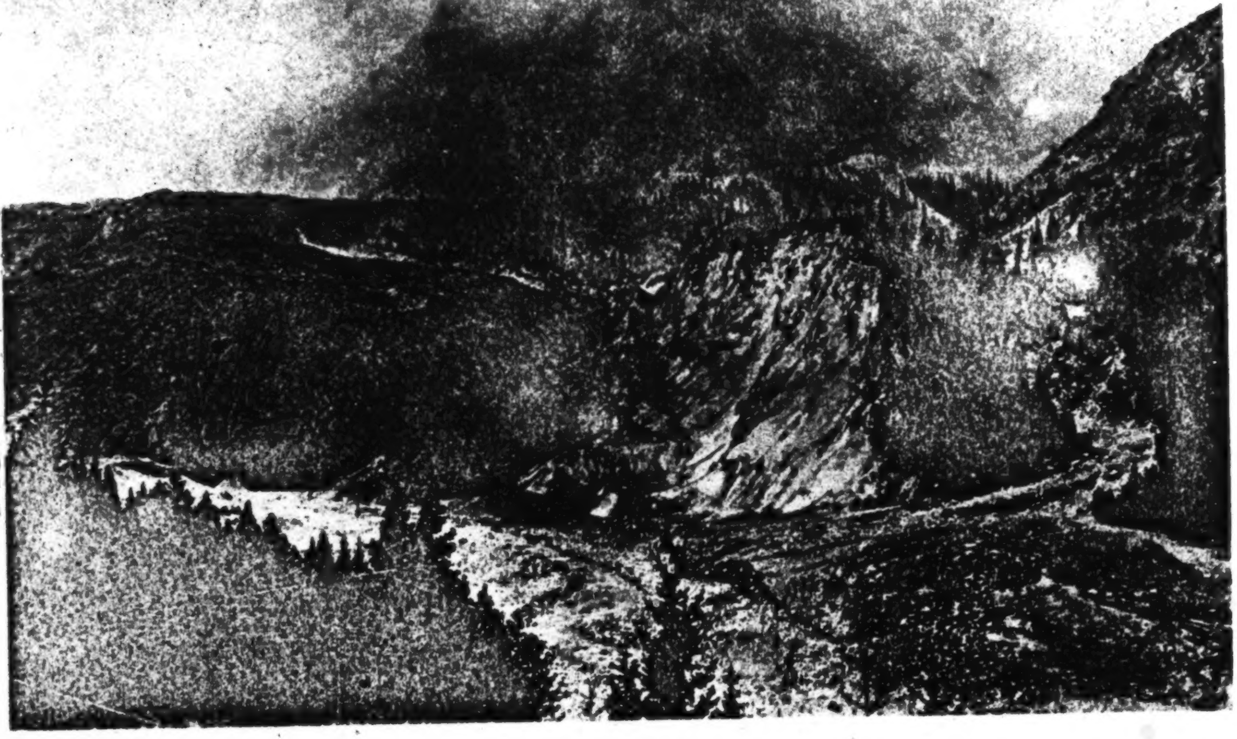
[1] This name seems to represent the words *Chikir Oghil* or "the shepherd station of Chikir." I found a Chikir glen and pastures at the head of the Oitagh, on the north side. Stein gives the name "Chakragil" to the peak at the head of the Bostan Arche valley, some miles to the north-west, which he explored on his third journey. If a name is required for the whole massif, Chakragil would seem the most suitable one.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AII Sinkiang AII

[Face p. 282]



FOOT OF COMBINED OI TAGH AND BÜL ÜSH GLACIERS, ALPS OF CHAKRAGIL
SHOWING BLACK-ICE CAVE FROM WHICH GLACIER-STREAM ISSUES, AND FIR-CLAD LATERAL MORAINE

~~[illegible]~~

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133 do those of Qungur. The foot of the Oitagh Glacier is only 8,800 feet above the sea, as against an average of 12,000 feet in the case of the smaller and much less steeply-pitched glaciers of the Qaratash basin. The volume of the Oitagh Glacier is really enormous, but its ice-fall is so steep that the whole glacier is barely 4 miles long. It has several remarkable features. One is its tributary, the Bül Ush, which butts into it from the north-west near its foot, pushing it right across the valley and jamming it against the steep south-western side. A depression about 150 feet deep is thus formed above the bulge, and into this falls the moraine-stream, which travels under the ice for a mile and reappears from a remarkable cave in the black ice of the glacier-foot. Before joining the main glacier, the Bul Ush runs parallel with but about 2,000 feet immediately above it. A series of magnificent water-falls descends from the upper glacier to the lower at this point; one of them is at least 500 feet high and falls clear like the Swiss Staubbach, while another spouts out from a cleft in the cliff like tea from a pot. Yet another feature of the Oitagh glacier is its three parallel lateral moraines, one of which has a double edge with a trough 2–4 feet deep between.

137 The vegetation of the "alcove" at the head of the Oitagh valley, though of the same Tien Shan type, is altogether richer than that of the Alps of Qungur, doubtless owing to the lower elevation and to the shelter afforded by the tremendous precipices which enclose it on every side but the north-east. We had no rain, but from the appearance of the vegetation, the accounts of the inhabitants and the close proximity of the ice-clad mass of Chakragil I should say that the precipitation is at least as heavy as that of Kaying Bashi. Rowan-trees are more common and have great bunches of berries the size of small cherries: wild currants abound, and the conifers grow more densely if not taller. One fallen giant I measured was 112 feet long.

342 At the summer grazings the Turki "Taghlik" inhabitants, of Pilal occupy *aq-ois* like the Kirghiz, just as do the Tajiks of Sarikol who are racially totally different from either. They
231 graze all kinds of stock, including yaks, which they breed for the Kashgar meat market, not for riding or milk. The Kashgar military authorities put from 25 to 50 horses out to grass
651 up the valley every summer. The inhabitants of the *jilgha* are assessed for revenue at 500 *charaks* of barley, which can

65/ be commuted at 12 tengas (2s.) per *charak*, the market price being 4 tengas.[1]

356 Talking to the mountain people one occasionally gets amusing little side-lights on the difficulties of house-keeping in an *aq-oi*. Among the woods at Chikir Aghzi we came upon some families striking camp. They said they were moving to an open piece of ground only a mile lower down.

"What is wrong with this camping-ground?" we asked.

"The mice have found us out and eat our bread," was the reply.

"Why don't you keep cats to eat the mice?"

"Because the cats would drink our milk!"

This was unanswerable, as anyone who had seen the interior of an *aq-oi* and its carefully-guarded "dairy" ought to have realized.

487 We crossed the Arpa Bel on 13th September, after spending the night at a chilly camping-ground above the highest fir-woods on the north-side. On the way up, when I was behind trying to take photographs, D. saw a pretty sight while she was waiting for me to come up. A herd of great shaggy yaks, unattended by any herdsman, came trooping down through the forest to drink at the stream. They came with such a rush, bringing earth and stones with them, that for a moment she thought it was an avalanche. They stood about in the water and on the grassy banks of the torrent, exactly like Highland cattle. They were still there when I came up, but my cortège disturbed them and they bunched together in the stream-bed as if awaiting attack, spoiling the picture. The dust-haze was worse than ever at the top of the pass, which I found to be 13,350 feet above the sea, and nothing whatever was visible of what would have been an unrivalled view. Both from the surveying and from the photographic point of view it was one of the worst pieces of luck I have ever had; for according to the calendar it was, or ought to have been, autumn and the clearest time of the year.

The Arpa Bel is a decidedly stiff pass, 6,000 feet on either side without a break, but although nothing whatever has been done to the track it is not actually dangerous. Still, it was as well that we had hired from the Pilal people fifteen

[1] The object is to encourage cultivation, even in pastoral country, and thus increase the population. Similarly, the Chinese encourage the planting of trees in the plains by collecting the land revenue partly in the form of timber.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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donkeys to share the loads with our carrier's ponies. We had one unfortunate casualty among the latter. One of them, though it was carrying less than half an ordinary load, showed signs of weakness on the way up. At a point where the track traversed the face of the Arpa Bel ridge this pony suddenly collapsed and rolled fifty yards down the mountainside, load and all. The carrier, Amin Jan, was after it like a knife, closely followed by myself and two other men. The slope was steep but not precipitous, and we were able to stop the pony rolling further. It was unhurt and reached the top of the pass safely, its load carried by hand. On the way down the south-side Amin Jan put a very light load on it, thinking that there would be no more climbing and that all would be well. Unfortunately about 1,000 feet below the top there was a short but very steep ascent where the track rounded a ridge; here the pony was again seized with staggers and fell 150 feet, being killed instantaneously. There must have been something wrong with the pony, which had had three days' rest and good grazing at Oitagh and was the only one to be affected by the pass; but we were sorry for Amin Jan, who wept bitterly at his loss, and we also regretted the spoiling of our own record. Until then we had not lost a single animal on any of our journeys.

The following day we rejoined the Gez Dara at 7,600 feet by a glen called the Chuchul Jilgha which was agreeably full of red-legged partridge and pigeons. The road up the Gez gorges is well kept up by the Chinese and is provided with solid wooden bridges where necessary. It is stones, stones all the way and one's horse must be walked every yard; but there is no difficulty or danger whatever, unless (as occasionally happens) a bridge has been recently washed away. The grandeur of the scenery is indescribable. The Gez, which here breaks through from the Pamirs between the great massifs of Qungur and Chakragil, is second only to the Yarkand River among the mountain streams of Kashgaria, and its cataracts in summer are a sight to behold. For 16 miles we followed the torrent which twisted and coiled among precipices rising higher and higher at every turn; in the evening at Khapa Gumbaz we looked straight up on one side to the summit of Qungur I, 15,500 feet above us and only 5 miles away, on the other to that of Chakragil not much less high. The air had cleared, two days too late for the Arpa Bel, and we saw the tops of the great massifs clearly.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

487 After spending a cold and uncomfortable night at Khafa Gumbaz (the name means "Domes of Wrath") we emerged on to the Pamirs by the windy gate of Bulunkul and camped at a little mud fort south of the lake amid typical
704 Pamir scenery. The garrison of this lonely post consisted of an out-at-elbows lieutenant and three men, all married to Kirghiz women. One of the soldiers interested me very much. A hawk-nosed, black-avised, alert little man in an enormous astrakhan hat appeared at the door of our *aq-oi* with an accordion in his hands, stood to attention smartly and entered without further ado. He told me he was a Russian Kirghiz from Tokmak in Semirechia, whence he had come three years before; he looked to me more like a Noghai or "Tartar," but might have been a Tartar-Kirghiz half-breed. He was very friendly and insisted on treating us to a concert on his "garmonie" (the Russian form of the word "harmonium" which they use for accordion). On that wheezy old instrument he played various long and unmelodious tunes in our tiny *aq-oi*. It was a painful performance, but we hated to hurt his feelings and were most appreciative; he was so very obviously a spy from across the frontier, and in so lonely and desolate a spot we could well understand his joy at finding at last a job of work to do.

487 During the next four days we wandered unhurriedly across the Lake District of the Chinese Pamirs, halting a day close to the north shore of the Little Qara Kul and another at Subashi. Here the Qungur and Muz Tagh Ata massifs stood round us in a vast amphitheatre, their dazzling domes and ridges of ice reflected exquisitely in the sapphire waters of the lakes. It was a pleasant time; the weather was perfect and the Kirghiz charming; sport was good, the lakes and marshes teeming with geese, ducks, teal and snipe. Near the Qara Kul we were met by our old friend Nadir Beg, the tall and jovial "British Watchman in Sarikol," with a regular cortège of Kirghiz and the inevitable wayside tea-drinking. Earlier in the same day we had an interesting *rencontre*. A party of
788 about twenty travel-stained and weather-beaten old men clad in ragged sheepskin cloaks and hats came riding northwards over the pamir. They proved to be Turki pilgrims returning from Mecca, the remnants of a party of fifty or more who had left Kashgar in April for the Holy Cities. They had had a terrible time, they said, on the high passes of the Hindu Kush between Tashqurghan and Chitral, and several of the

788 weaker pilgrims had been lost in the snow, thereby acquiring as much merit as if they had reached Mecca. They had nothing but praise for the authorities in Chitral, at Peshawar, on the Indian railways and at Bombay, where the official "Protector of Pilgrims" had put them on a specially-chartered steamer for Jeddah. In the Hijaz their troubles had recommenced, heat and disease claiming more victims than the snows of the Hindu Kush, besides which they had been held up for weeks by Bedouin robbers between Mecca and Medina. Returning by the same route, the survivors had found little or no snow on the passes and had had a comparatively easy journey.

000 Another interesting meeting was with a fine-looking old Kirghiz in a rich cloak and green turban at Subashi. This man, Khokan Beg, by name, told me that in Tsarist times he had been a great man in the Russian Pamirs, no less than the Mingbashi (Headman of a Thousand Households) of Great Qara Kul. Then a Pharaoh had arisen who knew him not, and he had migrated to Chinese territory with his wives and his sons and his daughters and flocks and his herds and everything that was his. He also told me that nine or ten years before he had entertained "a great British Consul and his wife from Kashgar," after whom he inquired; these can have been no other than General Sir Percy and Miss Ella Sykes, who visited the Russian Pamirs in 1915.

136 The Pamirs are well known to be the habitat of *Ovis Poli*, one of the three largest kinds of wild sheep in the world, the other two being *O. Ammon*, of Tibet, and *O. Karelini*, of the Tien Shan. Nowadays, however, good heads are very rare on the Chinese side of the frontier, especially in the more accessible regions. I gathered at Subashi, which used at one time to be a good centre, that most of the Kirghiz nowadays have guns of a sort and that they shoot down the sheep indiscriminately for food. The only corner of Chinese territory in which *Ovis Poli* are still to be found in some numbers is in the Qara Zak and neighbouring valleys, two or three marches north-west of Bulunkul. A pair of horns was brought to me which had come from the Russian side; evidently it was expected that I would want to take a trophy home with me, and would pay a good price. The measurements were 56 inches in length and 15¼ girth.

000 Even if there had been a chance of a stalk, as I had hoped, I should have had some difficulty in working it in, for thanks

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

000 to the brilliant clearness of the weather my plane-table and cameras kept me very busy. The "rays" and telepanoramas I obtained of Qungur and the Shiwakte from this side proved afterwards of the greatest value to Major Mason in his compilation of my topographical material.[1]

The cold at nights was severe, and the development of my plates and films was carried on under difficulties. Two or three of my best views, including a perfect one of Muz Tagh Ata, reflected in the waters of the Qara Kul, were spoilt by the plates freezing before they were properly dry. Snow fell almost every night, and unless one laced up the door of one's tent tightly before going to bed, there was apt to be a small snow-drift on one's pillow in the morning. Whenever we could, we occupied *aq-ois*, because of the fire which could be made in the middle if there was enough *burtsa* or *saxaul* brushwood. The latter is not a good fuel for open fires, but makes excellent hot-ashes for the "fire-bucket." If it is to be used for a fire, it is advisable to lay the plants with their stalks outwards and the bushy part towards the middle, as they burn better thus.

487 The Ulugh Rabat Pass (13,650 feet), immediately to the west of Muz Tagh Ata, consists merely of rolling downs with a barely perceptible watershed. When we crossed it on 20th September it had a little snow on it—just enough to make me wish I had my skis with me and could wait for the next snowfall. Between November and April, when the snow lies everywhere, one could ski every yard of the 5 miles from the top of the pass to the Qarasu post, and most of the 12 miles on to Ghujak as well. The run down the north side of the pass would be shorter, but just as good.

Passing the flourishing settlement of Tagharma, chief centre of the Tajiks, we reached Tashqurghan the following day, and after a couple of days' halt went on to Yurghal Gumbaz on 24th September. On the latter march we spent the whole morning visiting Pir Imam Dad and our other Maulai friends of 1922 at Tughlan Shahr. D. was struck by 181 the almost Italian vivacity and warmth of feeling shown by the Tajik women, compared with the more phlegmatic and reserved Kirghiz. In my dealings with the men, too, I found them much more excitable than either the Kirghiz or the Turkis of the plains. At Nadir Beg's house D. was greeted enthusiastically by a vivacious, bright-eyed, alert little woman, who had entertained her for ten minutes at Mintaka Aghzi 181 on the journey up. This lady had then been living with her father, the Beg of Mintaka, but had since married into Nadir's family. She rushed at D., patted her all over and began rearranging her hair, which had suffered from the gallop across the meadows from Tashqurghan. She also kissed her when leaving. A quite poor Tajik woman at Yurghal Gumbaz told D. that she had had nine children, of whom seven had died. One of her daughters had been very beautiful. "She died when she was still a bride," said the old lady. "She was very lovely, her eyes were full of fire.[1] She was so beautiful that I used to sit making clothes for her all day long."

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[1] "Geographical Journal," June 1925, pp. 406–8

The Tajiks use the word *chokan* for "bride," i.e. a wife who has not yet borne a child, whereas the Turkis as already 561 mentioned reserve the term for an unmarried girl. Similarly the word *jawan* is used for a woman who has borne children, not as at Kashgar. A Tajik married woman wears big mother-of-pearl buttons over her ears, and at intervals of about two inches down each *chach* or braid of hair. The appetite of the Tajiks for medicine is in no way inferior to that of the Kirghiz. A lad was sent with us all the way to Yurghal Gumbaz to fetch back from our camp doses of castor-oil and anteczema which D. had prescribed for a baby and an elderly widow respectively. D. gave most careful and explicit instructions to the messenger, but it is quite likely that they rubbed the widow with the castor-oil and administered the anteczema internally to the baby.

Three days later we reached Lopgaz at the northern foot of 487 the Mintaka Pass, 14,000 feet above the sea. It had been cold even at Paik, the stage before, and I had adjured the Beg who was looking after us, to be sure and provide good *aq-ois* and plenty of firewood. Imagine our disgust, therefore, wh[illegible] we arrived at the bleak and open Lopgaz camping-grou[illegible] just as the sun was dipping behind a snowy ridge, to find nothing but two miserable little huts, full of holes and smelling strongly, and not a scrap of firewood. The Beg was a long way behind with our loads, and there was nothing for it but to set to work and collect fuel for ourselves. All that was to be had in the valley was the tiniest growth of *burtsa* imaginable, plants the size of face-sponges and damp at that. After an hour we had collected a heap about two feet high, which

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[1] The Turki word for fire (*ut*) is also used for love.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AI1 Sinkiang AI1

487 we handed over to the cook, Murad Shah, when the caravan arrived. Eventually the Beg's men produced some better *burtsa* from far up the hill-side, and by nightfall we had enough for our own needs and those of our men. The *aq-ois* were impossible, but we had the tents pitched; D. sensibly went to bed in hers, and by nine o'clock we were dining snugly by her bedside off the usual three courses which Murad Shah never failed to turn out, however unpromising the circumstances. Ahmad Bakhsh even managed to provide a "fire-bucket" for D. next morning, for which she was very grateful, as there were six inches of snow on the ground at dawn and a blizzard was in progress. We struck camp and hurried up the last 1,700 feet of the ascent as quickly as we could, for fear lest the pass should be blocked; but it had cleared up by the time we reached the top and all was well, though the baggage-ponies had great difficulty in scrambling through the snow up the steep hill-face. The breakneck descent on the south side on to the moraine of the Mintaka glacier was very difficult, for the sun was strong, and the ponies slipped and staggered in the slush of the melting snow; we had to "nurse" them down very carefully, every one lending a hand. None the less we passed Gul Khwaja, where we had camped in 1922, and reached Murkushi before seven. After the fuel scarcity of the Pamirs—it is their chief drawback as a health-resort—the roaring bonfires we lit among the woods at Murkushi were a rare treat.

Next day (9th October) we reached Misgar. Here it was a curious sensation to receive and send telegrams over a counter once more and listen to the tap-tap of Morse. We had come back to the nineteenth century, if not quite yet to the twentieth. Our only *contretemps* was the engulfing of three of our ponies in the quicksands of the Kilik stream between Murkushi and Runhil; we fished them out, but several of our boxes were immersed, including one containing all my papers.

The six marches from Misgar to Ghalmit we covered in four days, finding the going very much better than in 1922. This was partly because there was more down-hill than up; partly because the Batura and Hussaini Glaciers were easier to cross owing to the lateness of the season; but mostly because the Mir of Hunza, with the assistance of a subsidy from the Kashmir State, had greatly improved the track. It was now scarcely anywhere less than two feet wide and reassuringly solid, especially along the perpendicular sides of the Kilik and Khunjerab gorges. Between Pasu and Ghalmit we went out of our way to visit a beautiful little lake called Baurit, about half a mile long by a quarter broad. It lies in the lap of ancient moraines and is fringed at one end with orchards and tiny farms with terraced fields, the rest of its shore being wild and rocky. We found it covered with duck and teal, and there were a few snipe to be had as well. After I had bagged enough for our larder and a few birds for the men, we lunched delightfully under a boulder on a terrace above the lake. In the still waters were mirrored green and golden orchards, just beginning to be touched by autumn, above which towered cliffs and hanging glaciers, domes and pinnacles of ice three miles high. D. said that while I had been shooting she had seen from this point an immense avalanche come down from the top of the very highest peak, nearly 25,000 feet above the sea; though it was 7 or 8 miles away, and not a sound could be heard, the whole face of the mountain seemed to be moving, a most awe-inspiring sight.

We achieved the two marches from Ghalmit through the terrible Hunza gorges to Baltit in one day, arriving after eight o'clock at night. The coolies with our loads did not get in till next morning, and we had to sleep in our clothes at the Mir's guest-house. Neither of us will ever forget our nocturnal reception at Baltit. The sandy-haired Heir Apparent and the tall Wazir met us with a large following, in the dark, at the castle of Altit and escorted us along the last mile of the road. As we approached the heights on which the Mir's summer residence stands, the shouts and cries of welcome of his retainers echoed down to us through the darkness, and we could see many lights moving to and fro above. When, after a stiff ascent, we emerged on the top of the plateau, a torchlight procession formed up and preceded us to the Mir's house, accompanied by wild strains from the State Band; and then we were shaking hands with the large and kindly Mir, and he was greeting us with obviously sincere smiles and words of welcome.

In England one talks of autumn "tints," that word being suitable for the colouring of an autumn in Europe. It does not apply in the Hunza-Nagar country, where the fruit-trees turn to such hues of scarlet and golden yellow, vermilion and orange and even bright pink, as would require the strongest oil-colours to do them justice. To the massed hues of the

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 AI1 Sinkiang AI1

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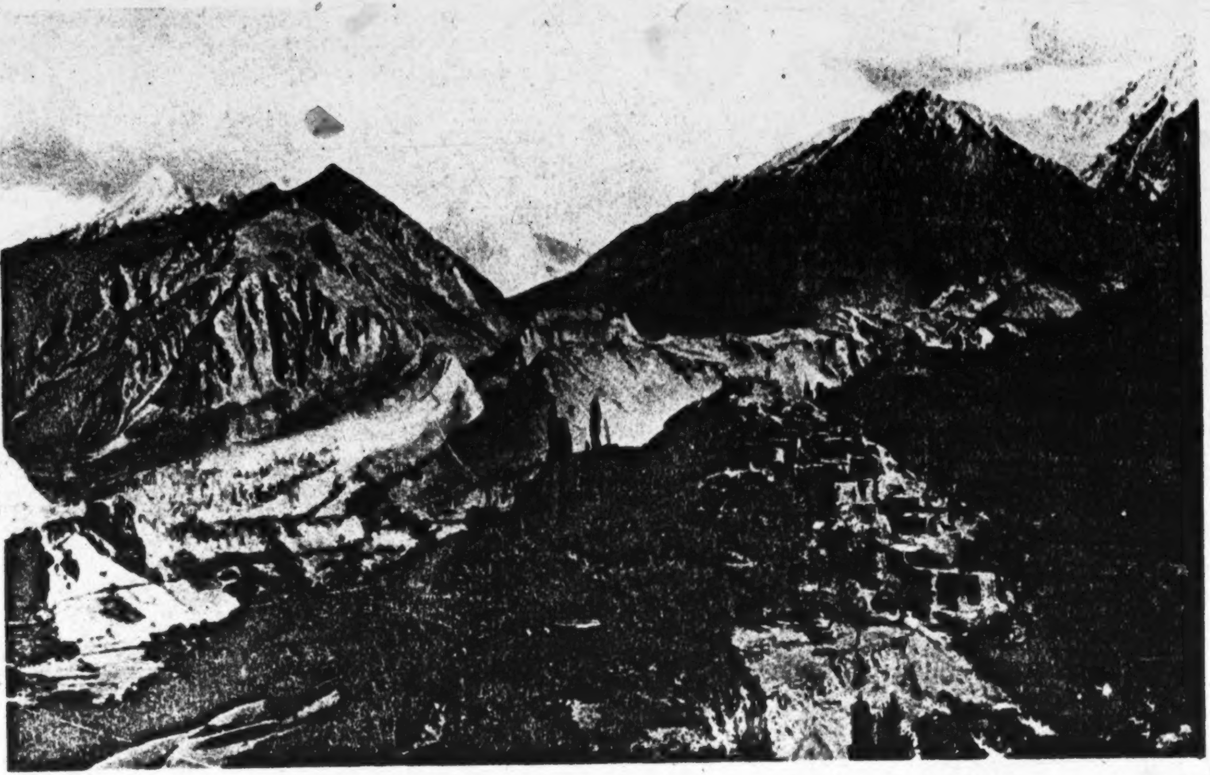
foregrounds add tier beyond tier of the most stupendous snows and precipices, lofty river-cliffs bearing ancient castles on their crests, quaint piled-up stone villages surmounting neatly-terraced fields; and you will wonder, as we did, how it is that no worthy artist of the West finds his way to scenes which would make his name world-famous, could he but transfer half their beauty and grandeur to his canvas.

After a halt of three days at Baltit we moved over to the capital of the rival state of Nagar, crossing the river by a narrow swaying suspension bridge and filing 6 miles up the Nagar Valley towards the snowy Hispar. Here we were made very comfortable in a pleasant guest-house by the good Mir and his extraordinarily handsome son, Mahbub Ali. They met us on the shady polo-ground, near a little lake which reflected the stone houses of the village and the ancient wooden castle of the Mirs of Nagar. What a picuresque scene it was! The Mir and his sons rode thoroughbred Afghan polo ponies; behind them came the "Subedar Sahib," the Mir's right-hand man, a jovial talkative person, to whom we took a great liking; then there were various dignitaries, "Trangpas" or headmen of villages, "Yerpas" or tax-collectors, falconers with hawks at their wrists; in the background were the stalwart lads of the bodyguard dressed in grey woollen uniforms, dark-brown ibex-hide riding-boots, and the peculiar quoit-shaped head-gear of the country; last but not least, the musicians of the State Band blew furiously on their quaint pipes and banged their drums.

The Nagar valley is not so grandiose as that of Hunza, for its river is much smaller and the snows of the Hispar at its head, though they cradle the biggest glaciers in the world outside the Arctic Circle, do not show up as well as Rakaposhi and the other giants which tower above Baltit. But there is an intimate and cosy "feel" about Nagar; it is picturesque in a less magnificent way, being broken up by village-crowned backbones of rock into secluded basins and "happy valleys" full of green fields and foliage. There are other differences between the two rival States. Pears grow best in Nagar, grapes in Hunza. The people of the former State are orthodox Sunnis, those of the latter Maulais. Hunza still keeps up the connection with China; Nagar looks rather to India. Most interesting of all, among the Nagaris, there is more that takes one back to the remote past than there is in Hunza. You see among them more of the Hellenic type of features,

[Face p. 292]



LOOKING UP NAGAR VALLEY TO HISPAR

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modified indeed by a liberal infusion of the Pathan nose. At Baltit I do not remember the children playing with bows and arrows, whereas in Nagar not only does every small boy carry a bow, but as mentioned before, the ancient Parthian archery on horseback is still regularly practised.

The Mir held a gala day of polo, tent-pegging and mounted archery in our honour. The previous evening the Band played loudly for an hour; this was a signal dating from the bad old days, when the men of Nagar used to be summoned for a raid by wild strains from the Mir's musicians, each village passing on the call to the next. Nowadays reigns the *pax Britannica*, and the tocsin only sounds for polo. The Mir lent me a beautiful Badakhshani stallion and made me tent-peg and play polo, but I refused to try my hand with the bow and arrows; I preferred to watch with D. the young Nagaris thundering past, their hair and shirts fluttering in the wind, and hear them shout with joy as they neatly planted their arrows on or near the little silver mark. Whoever hits the "peg" with lance or arrow gets it, and at least a dozen trophies were distributed afterwards by the Mir. I am quite certain my lance-point went nowhere near the "peg," but the polite Mir, with many congratulations, presented me with a small rosette stamped out of beaten silver; there was a nick in one edge where he gravely informed me that I had grazed it.

One day we were conducted by the Subedar Sahib far up the valley to a broad cultivated basin among the mountains, called Hopar. Many charming peeps we had on the way, of tiny hamlets in sunlit valleys, each with its wooden mosque, amid walnut foliage and the orange and vermilion of the orchards, of threshing-floors with men and women threshing on them and fields dotted with sheep, goats and the little black cows of the country. At the further end of the Hopar basin the Subedar Sahib had a surprise in store for us. We suddenly came out on a cliff-top overlooking the most awe-inspiring glacier I have ever seen. It was the Kepal, one of the great glaciers of the Hispar, a "sea of ice" indeed, which swept down from towering snows in tremendous curves of glittering serac, striped with long lines of rock-debris. The Kepal glacier is still slowly eating away the Hopar basin, against which it presses; we climbed down on to a section of cliff with the ruins of cottages on it, which had subsided thirty or forty feet, evidently undercut by the ice.

Aft[illegible]ing the hospitable Mir of Nagar farewell we march[illegible]wn the Nagar river to the Hunza valley once more. Instead, however, of crossing to Baltit we kept to the south side of the valley which is in Nagar territory and commands, if possible, even finer views than the north. At the Nurtezabad bridge we rejoined our 1922 route, spending the night as before at the Arcadian village of Minapin. At Chalt we stayed two nights, as I was anxious to explore the beautiful Chaprot nullah and obtain from it a long-coveted photograph of Rakaposhi's sword-point peak. Fate and the weather were kind, and we spent a most enjoyable and successful day among pine-woods high above the picturesque fortress-village of Chaprot.

From Gilgit, profiting by our experiences of 1922, we hired mules for the whole journey to Bandipur instead of relying on the transport available from stage to stage. As a result we covered the distance in eleven days instead of fourteen, without hurrying. It was curious to travel in comfort and luxury down the Srinagar road, with transport running like clockwork, plentiful supplies, a well-engineered six-foot track and palatial dak-bungalows at the end of each absurdly short stage, and to think what "heavy weather" we had made of the same journey in 1922. So much does relativity count for, and the sense of proportion developed by life and travel in High Asia. The Burzil Pass, which we crossed on 23rd October, seemed very small beer after the Arpa Bel, or even the Mintaka, while as for the Tragbal, it was merely a pleasant grassy ridge among pine-woods.

Embarking at Bandipur late on the night of the 26th October, after a long final march, we were poled across the Wular to the lake-port of Sopor. Here the following afternoon we boarded the twentieth century in the shape of a large motor-lorry, which rattled ourselves, our baggage and three of our men in a couple of hours to Srinagar, 35 miles away. It was amusing to watch the effect of the said twentieth century on an intelligent Kashgari like Hafiz, who had never seen so much as a Ford in his life. As we jerked wheezily forward at three miles an hour through the crowded bazaar he murmured with goggling eyes, "*Ajaib bir nersa shu!*" (This is a wonderful thing!) Later, on the main road after dark, a car with headlamps lit dashed past us; Hafiz' excited comment was, "It's got eyes!" One day at Srinagar we took him and Sangi Khan (to whom also it was all new) for a drive in a powerful touring car lent us by our kind host, Sir John

Wood, the Resident in Kashmir. When the chauffeur let her out along the smooth poplar-fringed road to Dachigam, Hafiz, who shared the back seat with D. and myself, turned to us and said, " When he goes fast, the trees come running, running ! "[1]

There was much to do and very little time to do it in at the Kashmir capital, for I had to fit in visits to headquarters at Delhi and to the Survey of India at Simla before we sailed from Bombay. One of our chief preoccupations was finding suitable homes for the ponies. Tutankhamen had already been presented by D. to our friend the Subedar Sahib at Nagar, of whose children he was to be the pampered mount. A British officer of my acquaintance at Chilas bought three of the ponies, including " Polu pony," from which woolly but staunch little beast I was more than loath to part. The black Badakhshi stallion also went to an English home, and D. made a present of her beloved Ferghana gelding to a lady who she knew would be kind to it. Then there were the men to be paid off, Hafiz and Sangi Khan and Murad Shah and Yakub, and their return journey arranged, quickly, before the snows of winter closed the passes. Ahmad Bakhsh, our only Indian servant, was to come with us as far as Bombay. These and other details, such as packing and repacking, selling off our worn and battered kit and so on, gave us little time to think.

Then there came a morning when everything was done and a big touring car stood ready to take us down the road to Rawal Pindi. The four men who were to go back stood in the roadway outside the Residency gate to see us off. They had already said good-bye to D., who sat with Ahmad Bakhsh in the car, a little way up the road, and now my turn came. I began to say something to them in Turki about having made arrangements for their transport and rations as far as Gilgit, and hoping that they would have a good journey ; and then I caught sight of the expression of gloom upon their honest, weather-beaten faces, and I realized suddenly what it all meant. No more would the stout-hearted cheerful Hafiz take the long trail with us on his trusty Kalmuck steed, always at hand to make our ways smooth with his tact and common-sense. No more would the strong arm of Sangi Khan, nature's gentleman if ever there was one, be ready to support his " Mem-Sahib " over difficult mountain-paths. No more would

[1] Turki *zhugurup keladur.*

the unassuming Murad Shah cook miraculous meals for us in the most unpropitious circumstances. No more would the faithful Yakub toil with us over hill and dale, river and sand-dune, desert and oasis, urging on the phlegmatic Tutankhamen with raucous but persuasive cries.

A lump rose in my throat and I stood looking at them, unable to say more. Then Hafiz relieved the tension by striding forward and grasping my hand. They all shook hands in silence and turned away towards their boat. A moment later we were spinning down the road to India and home.

The last link with Kashgar was broken.

APPENDIX

NOTE ON PHOTOGRAPHY IN CENTRAL ASIA

THE following details may be of interest to those who, like myself, have a taste for landscape and other photography "off the beaten track." I must explain here that I have not studied the theory of the subject at all, and do not pretend to be able to tell experts anything they did not know before. Photographical processes do not interest me; I only did my own developing and enlarging in Central Asia from what I regarded, for reasons given below, as dire necessity. My one object was to get pictures.

Landscape, particularly mountain scenery, being my especial hobby, I concentrated chiefly on the problem of obtaining a uniform density from top to bottom of the negative. For this purpose I used an adjustable filter shaded from orange at the top to practically plain glass at the bottom. This could be used at strengths varying from 2 or 3 to 40 or 50 times, according to the length of exposure practicable. Used at full strength it cut out over 90 per cent. of the blue and ultra-violet rays from the upper part of the field, and proportionately less from the middle and lower parts. This prevented clouds and snow-capped peaks, etc., from being "swamped" by the blue of the sky, and at the same time gave proper values for the middle distance and foreground. In this connection it may be of interest to note that in the plains and lower hills of the Tarim Basin I found a higher strength of filter to be necessary than in the intensely clear air of the high ranges and of the Pamirs; this I ascribe to reflection from the fine loess dust which is never entirely absent from the atmosphere of the Basin, even when it cannot be detected by the eye.

I used two cameras, both battered but trusty pre-War instruments, one taking postcard-size plates, the other quarter-plate roll-film. Both had between-lens shutters and extending bellows, thus enabling me to take long-focus views wherever proper foreshortening was essential. In the plate camera I used either rapid orthochromatic or fine-grain slow plates according to the subject.

By far my most difficult subjects were the distant visions of snowy mountains seen—only too seldom—from the plains. I "collected" the great ranges of Central Asia, and spent much time, energy and material in their pursuit; specimens of my telepanoramas of the Kashgar Range, Kunlun and Tien Shan will be found opposite pp. 116 and 258. After many failures, I discovered that the only way in which I could obtain any results at all was by using slow plates and the filter described above at full strength. The best, in fact the only, time of day for the more distant telepanoramas I found to be from two to three hours after sunrise. The only telephoto lens I could use with my plate camera was a light small-aperture instrument magnifying 4 diameters and therefore requiring 16 times the normal exposure. The combined effect of all the above factors was that the length of exposure needed for each plate was relatively enormous, usually between 4 and 8 minutes. This meant that the taking of a telepanorama of 5 or 6 plates occupied anything up to an hour, during the whole of which time the sun was rising and the light strengthening steadily. Each successive plate, therefore, required a slightly shorter exposure than its predecessor; the progressive reduction I applied was about 8 per cent. for each plate. The problem was still further complicated by the varying illumination of different sections of the same panorama according to the incidence of the sun's rays relatively to the camera. When photographing round from South West to South, for example, a shorter exposure was required for the south-western end of the panorama, on which the sun's rays fell more directly, than for the southern.

Perhaps I may be permitted to offer a few words of advice to those who travel with a camera in Central Asia:

(1) Take a tank developing outfit with you, if no more, and develop your own plates or films in camp before you go to bed, or at any rate during halts at towns. When developing in camp, use spirit for drying the negatives; I did not know about this plan, and I consequently lost many pictures from the emulsion freezing, receiving a deposit of dust or being otherwise damaged while drying at night in my tent. If there is no convenient running water handy, use "hypo-killer."

Except for a spare tin basin, my whole developing outfit for both plates and films fitted into a locally-made wooden box 16″ × 12″ × 8″ weighing about ½ lb. It is a nuisance to have to do one's own developing, but the amount of waste and (more important) loss of desirable pictures thereby prevented is enormous. It must be remembered that it is quite useless to send plates or packed films from one to two months' journey for development; even roll-film is not immune from deterioration in such circumstances. Apart from this, it is almost impossible to acquire the experience of local light-conditions and other factors necessary for really satisfactory pictures, if you do not see your results until several months after exposure.

(2) Photograph landscape only under the best possible conditions of light and atmosphere. Do not waste time and material on scenes,

however well they "compose," which are imperfectly lighted, or on days when there is an appreciable amount of dust-haze in the air. Wait if possible until the sun's rays fall at right angles to a line drawn from the camera to the centre of the subject.

These may appear counsels of perfection; but my experience is that in the aftertime, views taken in poor light or on hazy though sunny days do not receive a second glance in comparison with those secured under the favourable conditions described above.

(3) When photographing the people of the country, conceal the camera and your intentions up to the last moment, if not beyond it. One natural, unselfconscious picture of native life is worth twenty "groups" or posed photographs of individuals; but it is also much more difficult to secure. I found the Turki, like the Persian, extraordinarily sharp at detecting the presence of a photographer. Directly you produce a camera of any size in a Central Asian street, the men all spring to attention and the women either bolt like rabbits or cover their faces and cower into corners. For example, I "hunted" street story-tellers and their audiences for weeks before securing the photograph which appears opposite p. 204. The above does not, however, apply to the Kirghiz of the mountains who, men and women alike, are not in the least shy or self-conscious and are perfectly easy to photograph.

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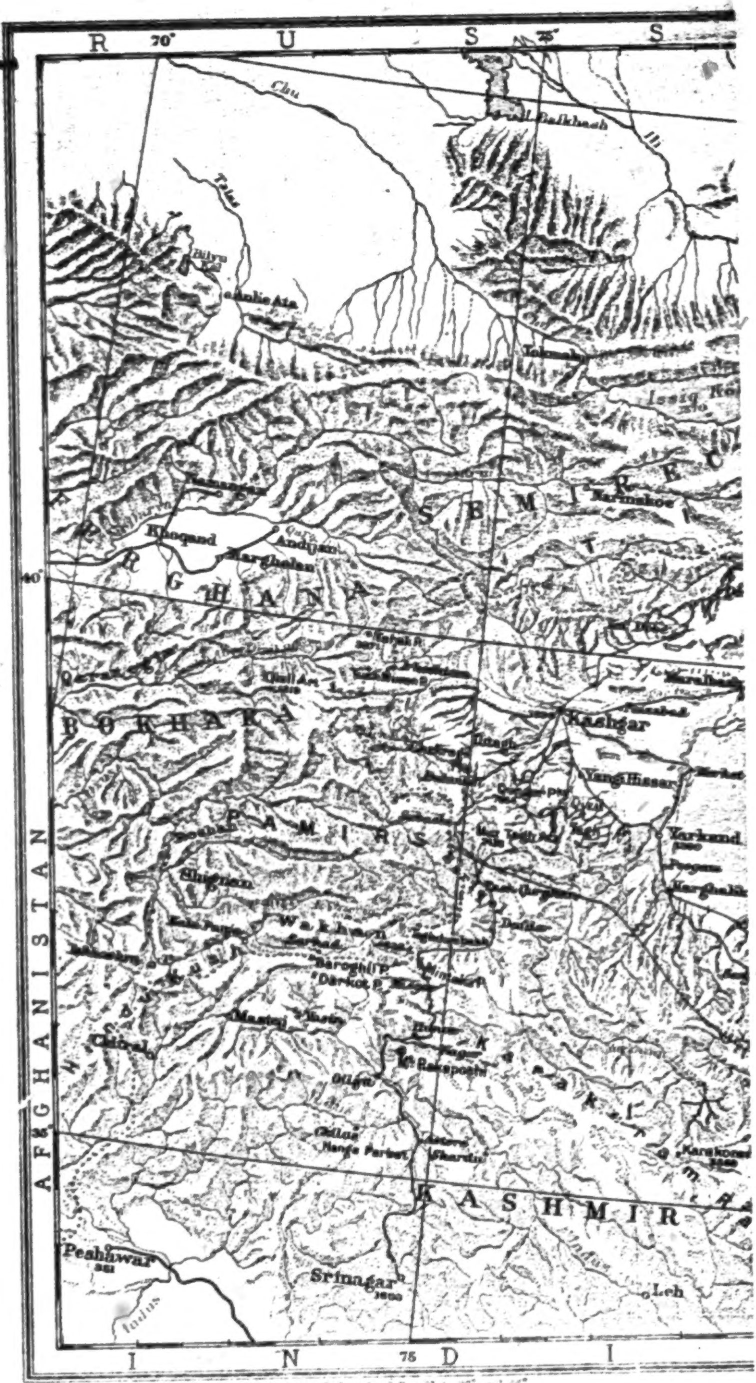
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Andijan
Marghelan
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B O K H A R A
Kashgar
Yangi Hissar
Yarkand
P A M I R S
Shignan
Wakhan
Baroghil P.
Darkot P.
Mastuj
Chitral
Gilgit
Rakaposhi
Nanga Parbat
Astor
Kharalu
35°
K A S H M I R
Karakoram
Peshawar
Srinagar
Indus
Leh
A F G H A N I S T A N
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75

Conical Projection with Errorless Meridians and Standard Parallels 36° and 44°

[End map A]

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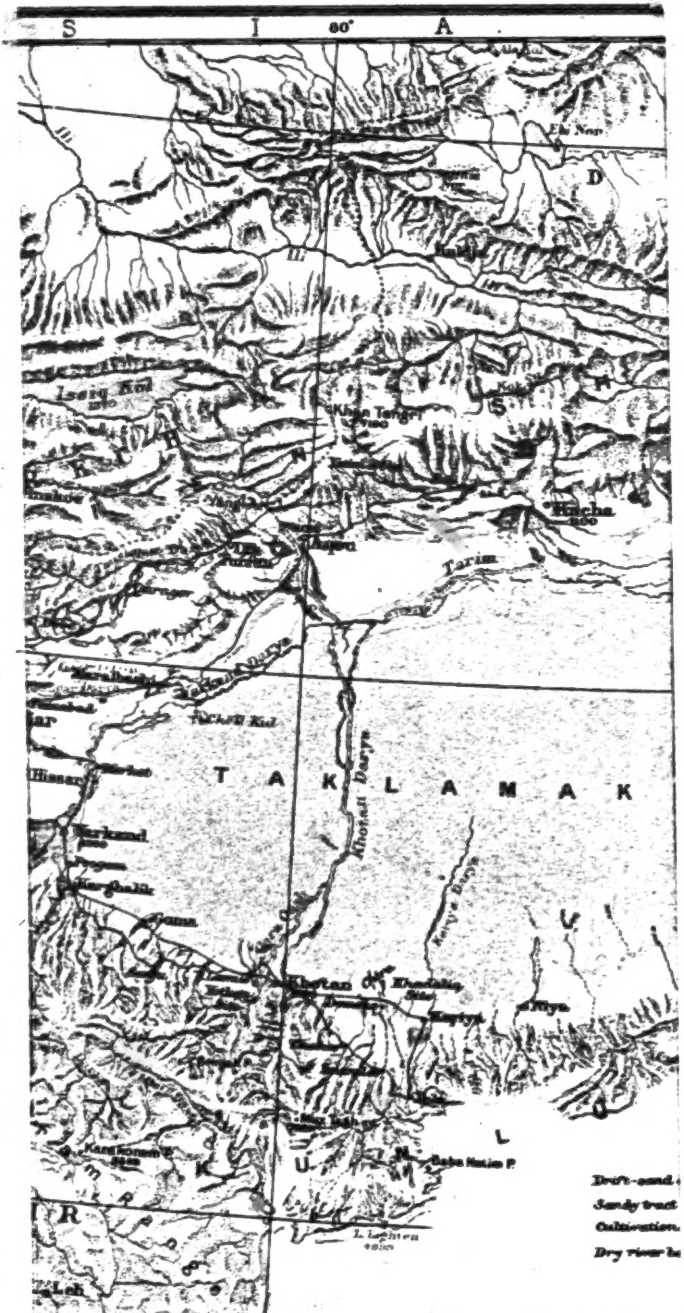
3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All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Yarkand
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Dry river b
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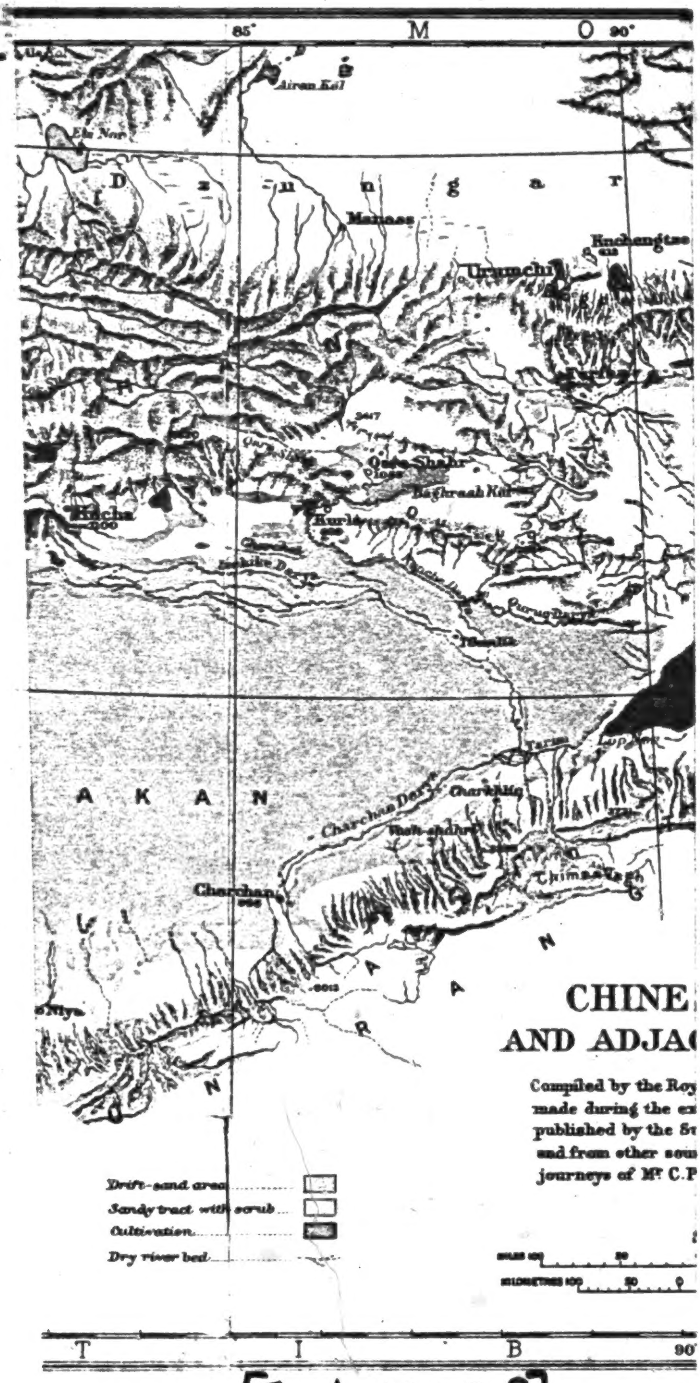
[End map B]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All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Baghrash Kul
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Kucha
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Qum Darya
Tarim
Charchan Darya
Charkhlik
Vash-shahri
Charchan
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CHINE
AND ADJA
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made during the ex
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and from other sou
journeys of Mr C.P
Drift-sand area
Sandy tract with scrub
Cultivation
Dry river bed
MILES 100 50
KILOMETRES 100 50 0
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90°

[End map C]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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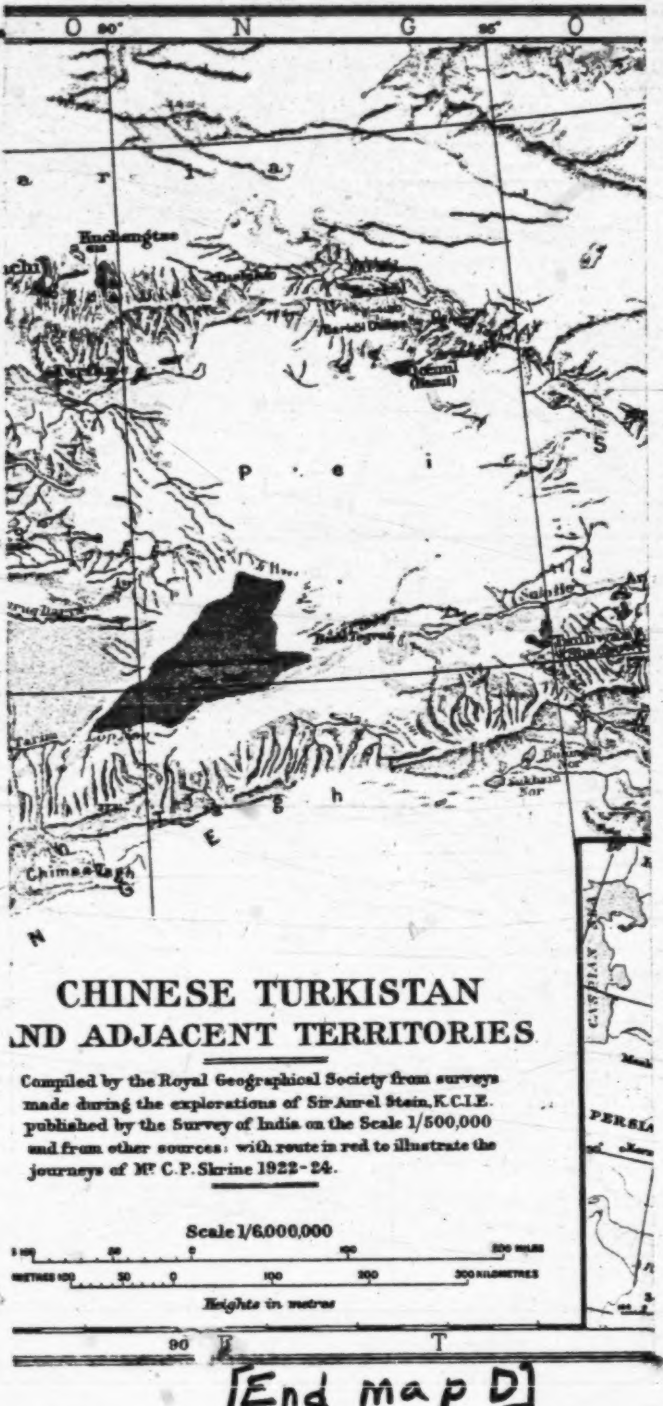

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90
T

CHINESE TURKISTAN
AND ADJACENT TERRITORIES

Compiled by the Royal Geographical Society from surveys made during the explorations of Sir Aurel Stein, K.C.I.E. published by the Survey of India on the Scale 1/500,000 and from other sources: with route in red to illustrate the journeys of Mr C. P. Skrine 1922-24.

Scale 1/6,000,000

Heights in metres

[End map D]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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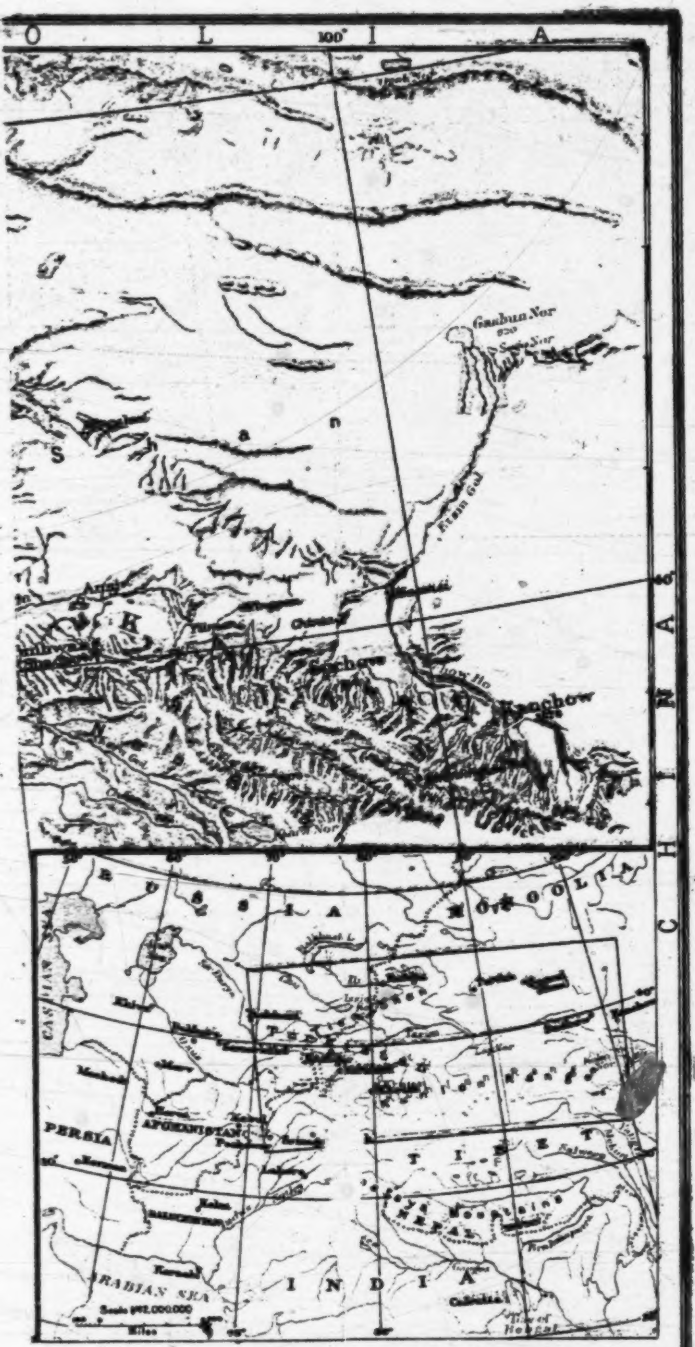
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CASPIAN
PERSIA
AFGHANISTAN
T I B E T
NEPAL
I N D I A
ARABIAN SEA
Bay of Bengal
Scale 1:42,000,000
Miles

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[End map E]